No.12

COLD WAR BERLIN: AN ISLAND CITY

VOLUME 2: THE BERLIN WALL, 1950-1961

ACHTUNG!
Sie verlassen jetzt
WEST-BERLIN
14

Europe@War Series

ANDREW LONG

Helion & Company Limited
Unit 8 Amherst Business Centre
Budbrooke Road
Warwick
CV34 5WE
England
Tel. 01926 499 619
Email: info@helion.co.uk
Website: www.helion.co.uk
Twitter: @helionbooks
Visit our blog http://blog.helion.co.uk/

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MAP OF EUROPE 1945–1992

Note: In order to simplify the use of this book, all names, locations and geographic designations are as provided in *The Times World Atlas*, or other traditionally accepted major sources of reference, as of the time of described events.

Dedicated to Sara, Alex and Katie, with all my love

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Allied Control Council
APC	Armoured Personnel Carrier
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine (UK)
BCZ	Berlin Control Zone, airspace over Berlin
BGS	*Bundesgrenzschutz*, Federal Border Protection Force, (FRG)
BOB	Berlin Operating Base, CIA (US)
BOOB	Bolt out of (the) blue attack. i.e., First Strike
BRD	*Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (derogatory abbreviation used by the DDR)
BRIXMIS	The British Commander-in-Chief's Mission to the Soviet Forces of Occupation in Germany (UK)
BStU	*Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (FRG)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union (USSR)
ČSSR	*Československá Socialistická Republika*, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic
DGP	*Deutsche Grenzpolizei*, East German Border Police (DDR)
DDR	*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, German Democratic Republic or GDR
ELINT	Electronic Intelligence
FDGB	*Freier Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund*, Federation of Free German Trade Unions (DDR)
FDJ	*Freie Deutsche Jugend*, Free German Youth, the *SED* youth wing.
FHG	*Freiwilliger Helfer der Grenztruppen*, Volunteer Border Force Helpers (DDR)
Freie Deutsche Jugend	*FDJ,* Free German Youth, the *SED* youth wing.
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany, *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (FRG)
GCHQ	Government Communication Headquarters (UK)
GDR	German Democratic Republic, *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* or DDR (DDR)
GPO	General Post Office (UK)
Grepos	*Grenzpolizei*, East German Frontier or border Police (DDR)
GRU	*Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye*, Soviet Military Intelligence (USSR)
GSFG	Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (USSR)
HUMINT	Human Intelligence (spies)
IGB	Inner German Border (*Innerdeutsche Grenze*), the border between East Germany and West Germany (a.k.a. Intra or Inter German Border)
IM	*Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter*, Unofficial Collaborator for the *Stasi* (DDR)
IOH	Indications of Hostilities
JFK	John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th President of the USA
KdA	*Kampfgruppen der Arbeiterklasse*, Combat Groups of the Working Class, the East German Factory Militia, a.k.a. *Kampfgruppen* (KG) or *Betriebskampfgruppen* (Company Combat Groups) (DDR)
KgU	*Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit*, Fighting Group against Inhumanity (FRG Berlin)
KPD	*Kommunistische Partei Deutschland*, the German Communist Party (pre-April 1946)
KVP	*Kasernierte Volkspolizei*, the 'barracked' People's Police, the East German paramilitary police force, which was the forerunner of the National People's Army, the *NVA* (DDR)

LBJ	Lyndon Baines Johnson, US Vice President, later President
LPG	*Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft*, Farmers 'voluntary' cooperatives (DDR)
MAD	Mutually Assured Destruction
MAP	Military Assistance Program (US)
MdI	*Ministerium des Innern*, the East German Ministry of the Interior (DDR)
MfNV	*Ministerium für Nationale Verteidigung*, the Ministry of National Defence (DDR)
MfS	*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, the East German Ministry for State Security (DDR)
MLM	Military Liaison Mission
MPU	Main Processing Unit (London)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NSDAP	*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, the German Nazi Party
NVA	*Nationale Volksarmee*, the East German Army (DDR)
OPC	Office of Policy Coordination, CIA (US)
ORBAT	Order of Battle
OSP	Office of Special Projects, CIA (US)
OSS	Office of Strategic Services (US)
Ostmark	The East German Mark (currency) (DDR)
RBT	*Rundblickbeobachtungsturm*, BT-11 watch tower (DDR)
RIAS	Radio In (the) American Sector (US)
ROE	Rules of Engagement
SED	*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*; the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (DDR)
SIGINT	Signals Intelligence
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service a.k.a. MI6 (UK)
SIOP	Single Integrated Operational Plan (US)
SMA(D)	Soviet Military Authority Germany (USSR)
SPD	*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, the German Socialist Social Democratic Party (DDR)
SSD	*Staatssicherheitsdienst*, East German State Security Service, the *Stasi* (DDR)
Stasi	*Staatssicherheitsdienst*, the East German State Security Service (DDR)
Trapos	*Transportpolizei*, East German Transport Police (DDR)
TPU	Technical Processing Unit (Washington DC)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development (US)
USIA	US Information Agency (US)
USMC	United States Marine Corps (US)
USSR	United Soviet Socialist Republic, the Soviet Union (USSR)
Vopo	*Volkspolizei*, the East German 'People's' Police Force, plural *Vopos* (DDR)
VPB	*Volkspolizei-Bereitschaften*, People's Police 'Alert' or 'Readiness' Units, Public Order/ Riot Police (DDR)

INTRODUCTION

In the years immediately following the end of the Second World War, Berlin had established itself as the epicentre of the fledgling Cold War, where wartime allies had become enemies in the shadow of the atomic bomb. The West, primarily in the form of the United States and United Kingdom, were facing off against the East, which was centred around the Soviet Union and her 'client' or 'satellite' states.

In a few short years, Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union and figurehead behind the worldwide communist movement, had engineered the spectacular coup of building a buffer zone, his 'Ring of Steel', between Western Europe and the Motherland of the Soviet Union. By converting the territory his Red Army had 'liberated' from the Nazis into communist 'client' states, he had successfully created an 'Iron Curtain' from 'Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic', to quote Winston Churchill.[1] Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia (until 1948), and East Germany had all fallen under the Soviet Union's patronage.

The city of Berlin, however, was a major thorn in Stalin's side. Located 100 miles into the Soviet Zone of Occupation, his former allies, Great Britain, The United States and France, insisted on retaining their right to occupy their sectors and protect their access rights into the city. In June 1948, he had tried to force them out by closing all the road, rail and waterway access into West Berlin, effectively blockading the city in the style of a medieval siege. The move shocked the world and proved to be an unmitigated disaster for Stalin after the US, British and French successfully supplied the city's every need by air for almost a year. The logistical miracle of the Berlin Airlift proved that the West's economic and industrial muscle could feed and heat West Berlin almost indefinitely and in May 1949 Stalin had to make an embarrassing climb down and open up the access routes again.

The whole escapade had the unintended effect of focusing the West's attention on the threat posed by the Soviet Union, which resulted, in April 1949, in the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, known by its initials: NATO. It also hastened the merging of the British, American and French occupation zones of Germany to create a new sovereign state, the *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Federal Republic of Germany, FRG or West Germany), which was formed on 23 May 1949.

Since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which ended the Second World War in August 1945, the United States had maintained the global monopoly on nuclear weapons, but on 29 August 1949, thanks largely to a masterful intelligence gathering operation, the Soviet Union detonated its own atom bomb, RDS-1. This momentous event caused a major shift in the global balance of power and brought the front line in the new Cold War straight back to Europe, with both sides possessing weapons of immense destructive power, and with Berlin at the epicentre again.

In October 1949, the global communist movement responded to these new threats with the creation of two new communist states. On 1 October 1949, after a long and bloody civil war, Mao Zedong declared the founding of the People's Republic of China, and on 7 October 1949, in response to the creation of the FRG earlier that year, the Soviet occupation zone became the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* or DDR (German Democratic Republic, GDR). Although the DDR was nominally an independent state, there should be no doubt that it was a client state of the Soviet Union, with Moscow pulling all the strings. The DDR also became a huge Soviet military base, with as many as 500,000 soldiers stationed there at its peak, accompanied by some serious hardware, ensuring that West Germany would be the frontline in any future global conflict.

And in the middle of it, sat Berlin; an island of Western capitalism surrounded by a sea of communism. The Western Allies were not budging despite Stalin's extreme provocations, thus ensuring the city would remain at the top of the agenda for global leaders as the 1950s began.

Befitting its cultural and political significance, the word 'Wall' is capitalised through the text and may refer to the 43.1km of inner-city sector border, the 111.9km outer ring (which was actually a fence) and to a lesser extent, the 1,400km Inner German Border. The word 'Wall' is used conceptually to encompass the divided Germany, the divided city of Berlin and all that stood for. The Germans refer to it just as '*Die Mauer*'. For the sake of consistency, the abbreviation used in this volume for the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* is DDR not GDR, and the *Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, that is, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), is abbreviated to FRG not *BRD*. *BRD* was used as a derogatory abbreviation for West Germany by the East German government and use of it was discouraged in the West. Both countries referred to themselves as Germany and saw themselves as the only legitimate German state.

Dates are shown using the British format: DD/MM/YY.

1

THE WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' STATE

Within days of the Berlin blockade lifting in May 1949, both sides began to entrench their respective positions in the city. While retaining some of the unique Four Power characteristics of the city's governance, the new West German government in Bonn introduced laws that brought West Berliners closer to their fellow citizens in the old Western occupation zones, including full adoption of the D-Mark as currency. The last point was fundamental to Berliners – at last they could now start to budget and plan for the future, with a stable, internationally recognised currency at the heart of their unique economy.

While the blockade and airlift were underway, the Soviets increased their grip over their sector in the East. In response to the D-Mark, the Soviets had introduced their *OstMark*, they had successfully installed a communist police force, the *Volkspolizei* and a communist assembly in the Rotes Rathaus, all contributing to an increasing divide between the East and the West.

In 1949, the Soviets began building their new embassy in Berlin, a massive construction project on the site of the old Tsarist embassy on Unter den Linden, the grand avenue in the centre of Berlin that leads down to the Brandenburg Gate. The new embassy stamped the Soviet boot print right in the centre of the city, with a huge brutal Stalinist pile in white stone with a red roof. The project would not be completed until 1952.

Although they had stopped the blockade, the Soviets continued their programme of obstruction and harassment. The trains were allowed across the Soviet zone again, but were limited to only 16 a day, and the Soviets insisted that they were pulled by East German engines, with East German crews. Passenger traffic was haphazard as timetables would change without any advance notice and lengthy delays were commonplace. Freight traffic was subject to random inspections and a growing list of banned goods made supplying the city increasingly difficult. Industrial action by West German railway workers just as Berlin was starting up again, made rail travel even more haphazard until the dispute was resolved at the end of June 1949. This pattern of obstruction and petty bureaucracy would continue until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

In response to the formation of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) in May 1949, the Soviets began their manoeuvring to ensure there was a pliant communist government in the East.

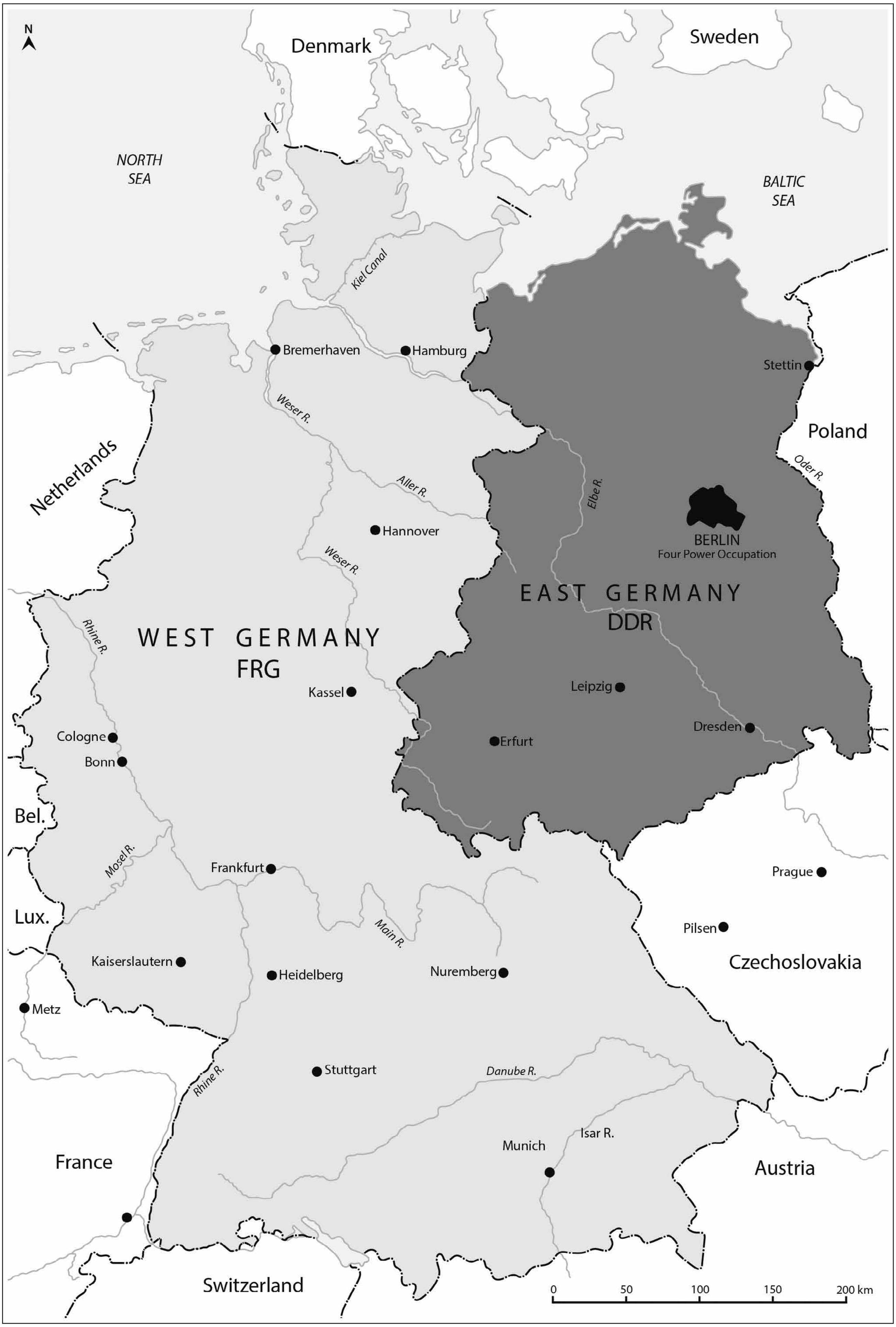
This began straight after the blockade with elections for the German People's Congress on 15 and 16 May 1949.[1] As with all Soviet client states, the election was a sham, its only purpose to give the illusion of democratic process. The voters were presented with a list of candidates which they could vote for in their entirety, vote against them or abstain. The so-called Unity List of the Bloc of Anti-Fascist Democratic Parties was totally controlled by the *SED* (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany) and in the end, it did not matter how anyone voted, because they would all get elected anyway. In fact, the ballot was not even secret in many parts of the Soviet zone, with widespread voter intimidation. Two thirds of the electorate voted in favour of the Unity List, but in future elections, favourable margins typically exceeded 99 percent.

DDR Created

With Moscow's blessing, the Congress 'agreed' a constitution for a new German Democratic Republic covering the Soviet zone, and elected a smaller group, the People's Council (the *Volksrat*), as its legislative body. On 7 October 1949, this new council sat for the first time, and armed with their new constitution formed the German Democratic Republic (DDR), officially dubbed "The Workers' and Peasants' State".

Confusingly, the new government chose the same flag as their neighbours, the Federal Republic of Germany. The confusion lasted until 1 October 1959 when the DDR added their national emblem, a hammer and compass surrounded by a garland of corn, to the centre of the flag, creating a distinction from their immediate neighbours to the west. The emblem was supposed to represent the alliance between the East German workers, farmers and intelligentsia. However, as a symbol of the widening gulf between the two halves of Germany the new flag was banned in West Germany and West Berlin as the *Spalterflagge* (the 'splinter' flag) until the late 1960s.

The veteran communist, Wilhelm Pieck, was installed as the first President of the DDR, and former *SPD* (*Sozialdemokratische Partei*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Main R.
Pilsen
Czechoslovakia
Kaiserslautern
Heidelberg
Nuremberg
Metz
Stuttgart
Danube R.
Rhine R.
Isar R.
Munich
France
Austria
Switzerland
0
50
100
150
200 km

East and West Germany 1961. (Map by George Anderson)

Deutschlands, the German Socialist Social Democratic Party) leader, Otto Grotewohl, as Prime Minister.[2] Pieck's deputy was Walter Ulbricht, who was pulling all the strings thanks to his links with the Soviets and within a year or so, had taken over most of Pieck's duties and power.[3] On the formation of the DDR, the Soviet Military Administration was dissolved, and its powers handed over to the *Volksrat* which was effectively superseded by the 'People's Chamber' (the *Volkskammer*), which notionally was the supreme organ of state power and its legislative body. By the time the *Volkskammer* came into being, all the other political parties in the Soviet sector (the Block Parties) had handed full control over to the *SED*, so East Germany was in effect a single party state.

When Pieck died on 7 September 1960, the position of president was abolished to fall in line with other Soviet client states and replaced by the State Council as a 'Collective Head of State'. The State Council was 'elected' every five years by the *Volkskammer*, and the 'Chairman of the State Council' acted as a formal figurehead to represent East Germany in International Affairs. Ulbricht was the first Chairman until his death in 1973, when he was succeeded by Willi Stoph. Erich Honecker consolidated his power, taking over in 1976 and ruled right up until the Wall was about to come down, followed, for a very short stint, by Egon Krenz.

Tellingly, the government of the German Federal Republic in Bonn and the new German Democratic Republic in Berlin each refused to recognise the other, and both claimed to be the only legitimate government of the German people.

In reality, the country was run by the *SED* along the Soviet model, through its Party structure and its all-powerful Central Committee. The General Secretary (or First Secretary) of the Central Committee, Walter Ulbricht, was the country's real leader, despite there initially being a separate head of state. The *Volkskammer* was simply there to 'rubber-stamp' bills, rulings and laws as dictated by the Central Committee, holding 'mock' debates and endless speeches – in fact members of the *Volkskammer* were explicitly told it was their 'duty' to explain and justify every act of the regime to the population, however it was not their duty to represent the wishes of their constituents. A 15-to-25-member Politburo, part of the Central Committee, was where the real power lay – Ulbricht, as General Secretary of the Central Committee also held the position of Chairman of the Politburo.

Stasi Created

As well as setting up the East German government in the style of its Soviet masters, the *SED* also began building its own state security system, modelled on the Soviet KGB. On 8 February 1950, the *Volkskammer* unanimously 'passed' a law establishing a Ministry for State Security (*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* or *MfS*), which included the State Security Service (*Staatssicherheitsdienst*, *SSD*) but mostly known simply as the *Stasi*. The first Minister for State Security was Wilhelm Zaissser, a veteran Moscow-trained communist and his deputy was Erich Mielke. The *Stasi* would go on to become one of the most repressive and effective secret police organisations in the world, maintaining an iron grip on its citizens and reaching far beyond its borders. It was safe to assume that the *Stasi* was everywhere in East Germany, combining Soviet brutality with German efficiency.

So, in a tumultuous 18-month period, the city of Berlin had withstood a Soviet siege thanks to an unprecedented logistical miracle by the Western Allies, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) had emerged out of the Tri-zone of British, American, and French post-war occupation zones, and the Soviets had created an East German communist client state, with the formation of the German Democratic Republic, along with its own KGB style secret police. Across the world, the forces of communism and capitalism were just about to go head-to-head in Korea, in the first proxy shooting match of the Cold War, in a conflict that began on 25 June 1950 and dragged on until 27 July 1953 (and at the time of writing has still not yet been formally concluded).

Observers in the West would note wryly that the new East German state was not actually a republic and certainly was not democratic. However, despite having two governments, two mayors, the city still shared sewage, public transport and telecommunications and apart from occasional checkpoints, the public still had free movement across the different sectors.

2

BUILDING SOCIALISM

By the early 1950s, the East German economy was struggling, with a sizeable budget deficit and massive trade deficit in favour of the rest of the Communist Bloc. The *SED* hierarchy rigidly stuck to their socialist dogma, but to the average East German citizen, the communist experiment was clearly not working. Despite Moscow's insistence that Ulbricht reversed the 'excesses' of his policies, he carried on regardless with his Stalinist policies of 'Building Socialism' (*Aufbau des Sozialismus*) including the wholesale collectivisation of agriculture, nationalisation of most of industry, a re-focus on heavy industry at the expense of food and consumer goods, the confiscation of thousands of private businesses and harsh restrictions placed on the owners of many others. The infamous 5-year plans sent political agitators into the countryside to 'persuade' the farmers to join 'voluntary' cooperatives, the *Landwirtschaftliche Produktions-genossenschaft* (*LPG*). Those who resisted were arrested. It ended up with 19,000 state cooperatives controlling 90 percent of all agricultural production. Unfortunately, this socialist utopia was highly inefficient, often with poor management, who owed their positions to Party loyalty rather than experience or qualifications. Shortages became a part of everyday life and living standards at the end of 1952 were lower than they were back in 1947, fresh out of the rubble of defeat. Also, the suffocating pressure exerted by the East German state machinery began to take its toll.

For many East German citizens, there was a growing realisation that life under communism was not what it was made out to be, and they began to look for a way of getting out. The demarcation line between the DDR (the former Soviet Zone of Occupation) and the FRG (the former British, American and French Occupation Zones) went from the Baltic Sea to the Ore Mountains (the Erzgebirge) and the border with Czechoslovakia, stretching approximately 1,400km (870 miles) over a variety of terrain. As such, the frontier was fairly porous and there were many places where it was possible to cross to the FRG undetected. The sector borders in Berlin were also nominally open allowing free passage from East Berlin to West Berlin.

The people taking advantage of this mostly undefended frontier tended to be young, educated, skilled and of military age – exactly the sort of people the DDR could ill afford to lose. They included doctors, dentists, teachers, engineers, skilled technicians and represented the future of the fledgling communist state, and they were leaving in their thousands as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Numbers of people leaving the DDR

Year	Refugees
1949	129,245
1950	197,887
1951	165,648
1952	182,393

To handle the flow of refugees from East to West Germany, the FRG government in Bonn set up refugee reception centres and transit camps at Uelzen in Lower Saxony, and Giessen, in Hesse.[4] Between 1949 and the end of 1952, over 350,000 people were registered at these centres, compared to 190,000 at the small refugee centre that had been set up at Charlottenburg in West Berlin. The East German authorities called the defectors *Republikflüchtlinge*, literally 'those who flee the Republic', and their numbers were about to get even bigger.[5]

In March 1952, Stalin decided to intervene and try to force the hand of his former allies: Great Britain, the United States and France. He wanted them out of Berlin, so he could shore up his 'Ring of Steel' (Churchill's 'Iron Curtain'), unencumbered by his sitting tenants in West Berlin. He also needed to ensure that the DDR was a viable state, and the mass exodus of skilled labour was clearly making that unsustainable. The tool he would use was a German peace treaty and this subject would become a regular refrain for the Soviet leader and his successors. Although Germany had surrendered on 8 May 1945, the breakdown in relations between East and West meant that the legal agreement to create a unified post-war Germany was put on hold. All parties wanted a unified Germany, but the nature of that new Germany was viewed very differently by the two sides. And the city of Berlin was the perfect illustration of that disagreement, still split four ways, with the Western Allies refusing to relinquish their rights to remain.

On 10 March 1952, Stalin delivered the 'Soviet Draft of a German Peace Treaty', which became known as the 'Stalin Note', to the British, French and American governments.[6] The Allies rejected it on 25 March on the simple grounds that they did not trust Stalin and were not prepared to give up their foothold in Berlin. Stalin's response to their rejection was swift and dramatic. He instructed Ulbricht to issue the 'Decree on Measures regarding the Demarcation Line between the German Democratic Republic and the Western Occupation Zones of Germany' (26 May 1952), which called for the sealing and fortification of the Inner German Border.[7]

The resulting construction project would become the world's second most fortified border (the border between North and South Korea being the most). This might not have resolved the Berlin issue, but it would increase the pressure on the West and go a long way to sorting out the DDR's *Republikflucht* problem, thus ensuring the viability of Ulbricht's puppet state.

Inner German Border

The Inner German Border stretched around 1,400km (870 miles) from the Baltic to the Czechoslovak border. It had different names, depending on which side the observer was on:

1. The FRG called it the *Innerdeutsche Grenze*, the *Grenzverlauf* or the *Landgrenze*
2. The DDR called it the *Deutsch-Deutsche Grenze* or the *Zonengrenze*
3. The West called it the Inner German Border (IGB), but it is sometimes referred to as the *Intra* German Border or the *Inter* German Border
4. The US forces called it the 'Trace' and many just referred to it as the '*Grenze*', Border or Frontier.

It mostly followed the route of the old Reich administrative boundaries, which went through towns, villages and bisected farms and factories. The East German authorities stuck religiously to these boundaries, with some small variations negotiated and agreed locally with the occupation forces, but for the Germans who lived in and around the new border, life was going to change dramatically.

Towns, villages and communities were cut in two, and the citizens could no longer simply move across town to visit friends and relatives, go to the doctors, to church, to school or to work as they were now in a different country. All low-level commercial links between the two states ceased, and in some cases, entire villages were razed to the ground. The new border cut off well-trodden paths, lanes, roads, autobahns, railways and waterways, except for the specified routes to West Berlin. Sometimes these were blocked by traditional red and white striped poles, reinforced with barbed wire trestle anti-vehicle obstacles. Others had ditches dug across them, with the spoil piled up on the Western side. Bridges crossing streams or rivers were dismantled, streams were blocked with grates or fences, elevated autobahn sections were pulled down, and railway tracks and their sleepers were pulled up.

The IGB would evolve into an enormous, industrialised operation, cutting a huge swathe across the land. As with all large projects, the IGB fortifications, the *Grenzsicherungsregime* (Border Security Regime) was developed and 'improved' over time, incorporating lessons learnt and newer technologies, but from the outset and from the way it was built, there was no doubt that it was designed to keep the East German population in, rather than stop foreigners coming in. It was not designed to stop hordes of invading NATO troops swarming across the border, it was the building of a very elaborate and expensive prison for East Germans.

On 11 December 1957 a law was passed making crossing the border without permission illegal, punishable by three years in prison. Known as the *Grenzgesetz* (Border Law), it highlighted the West's headhunting (*Abwerbung*) and human trafficking (*Menschenhandel*), luring East German citizens over to the West. (See the Appendices for a fuller description of the physical properties of the IGB).

The IGB would turn out to be a hugely expensive folly and did nothing to stop the overall number of refugees reaching the West, in fact, between 1952 and 1961, the numbers kept increasing. The long border itself was very porous to *Republikflüchtlinge* and all it did was funnel would-be refugees towards Berlin, which formed the escape hatch out of the DDR. However, once Berlin was closed, and the IGB became more industrialised, it became secure and the number of border violations reduced to a small trickle. It was, however, extremely expensive, not just in materials and labour,

BGS frontier patrol in a 1952 Volkswagen Karmann Cabriolet converted to take a MG 42 machine gun mounted on a pole and a radio. (Albert Grandolini)

BGS troopers armed with Karabiner 98k rifles and a MG 42 machine gun. (Albert Grandolini)

The West German federal authorities did patrol the border, but only to deter vandalism (thus avoiding official protests from the East Germans), monitor the border for customs purposes, and investigate any border infringements by the DDR. The main Federal border force was the *Bundesgrenzschutz* (Federal Border Protection or *BGS*), who came in to being on 2 March 1951 and initially used former *Wehrmacht* uniforms and weapons, but soon migrated onto American equipment.[8]

East German 1953 Uprising

In the middle of May 1953 at a meeting of the *SED* Central Committee, Ulbricht announced a 10 percent increase in 'work norms' or quotas for all of the DDR's workforce, irrespective of job type or industry sector. This crude attempt to increase productivity meant the average worker having to work 10 percent more for the same money, particularly affecting workers in manufacturing and construction.

The new work norms were quietly introduced and on 15 June, a group of around 2,000 construction workers, who found themselves working harder for the same pay (a net cut in their wages), downed tools in protest. That was bad enough, but the building they happened to be working on was a huge high-rise prestige residential block on Stalinallee (formerly Frankfurter Allee), billed as an example of the best design and craftmanship East German had to offer, a project that had been started in a blaze of media coverage.

The following day, a further 5,000 workers went on strike. The workers, easily identified by their white overalls, began marching en masse to deliver a petition to the DDR's Council of Ministers demanding reinstatement of their previous work quotas. As they marched, other workers joined them and by the time the crowd reached the ministry, it was 10,000 strong and very vocal. Not only were they complaining about the new work norms, but they began

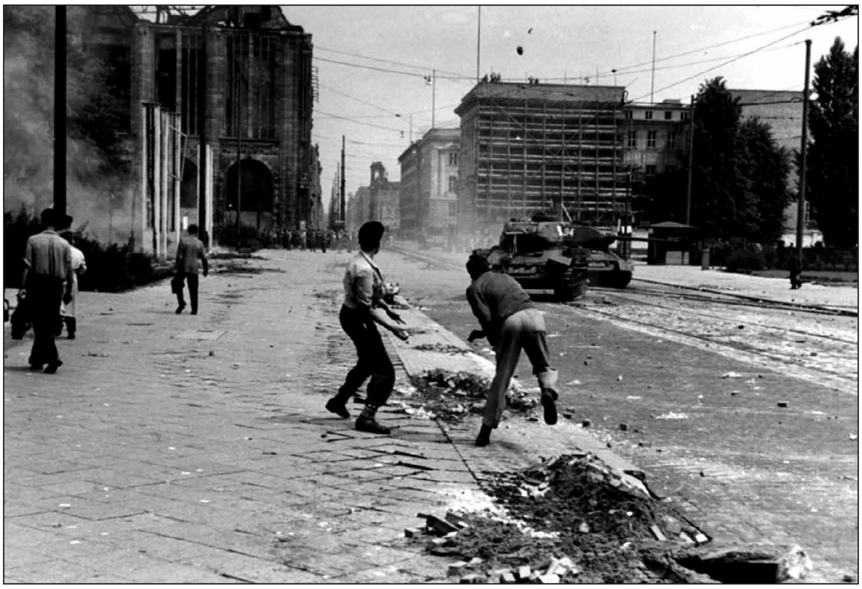
but also in manning costs, in a country that could ill afford such lavish expenditure. It was also an environmental disaster. The drain on resources brought about by their extensive border fortifications along the IGB and later around West Berlin was one of the main reasons the DDR failed as a state.

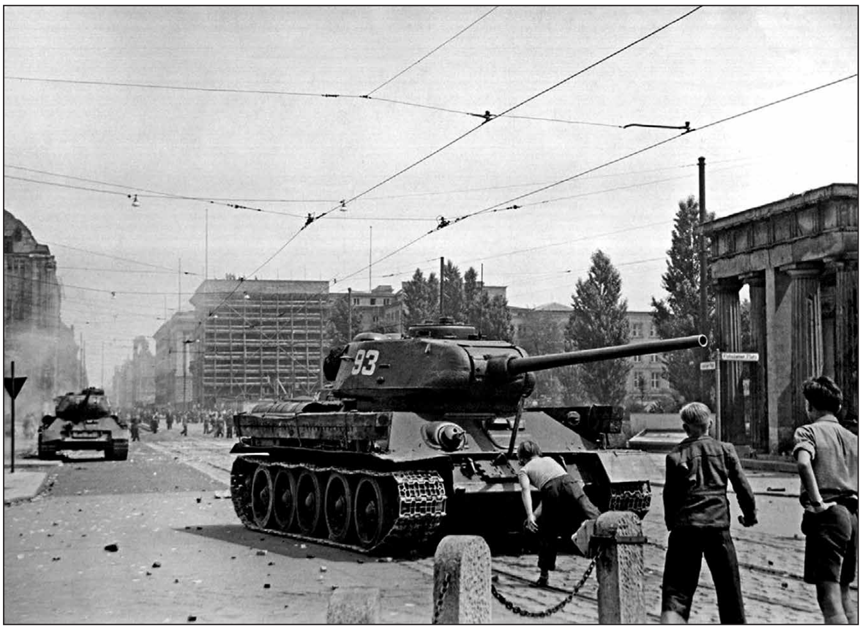
expressing dissatisfaction for the price of food and consumer goods, the general shortages of just about everything, and most dangerously, the communist regime. Although they called for Ulbricht or Grotewohl to address the crowd, they got Deputy Prime Minister Heinrich Rau and Minister of Ore Mining Fritz Selbmann, who after a lot of shouting down and booing, announced that these new work norms would be on a voluntary basis, and appealed to the crowd's socialist sense of duty.

The workers knew what 'voluntary' meant in East Germany and called a General Strike for the following day in protest, along with the resignation of the government and all-German elections. As the protest broke up, windows were broken and *SED* banners were torn down and destroyed. That evening, a delegation of the protesters went to the RIAS studios in West Berlin asking for assistance in spreading word of the strike due to start in the morning. RIAS – Radio in (the) American Sector – was ostensibly a West Berlin radio station but was listened to by many East Berliners, and 'dutifully' reported the request on air from 5AM the following morning.

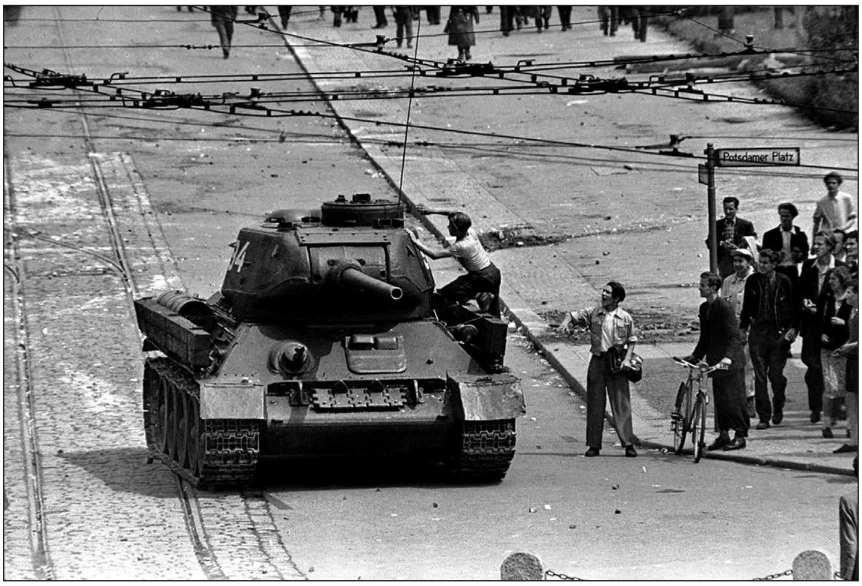
The following morning, the 17 June 1953, workers from factory after factory across East Berlin refused to work. *FDGB* representatives were sent in to get them to return but were quickly shouted down. The crowds grew rapidly, reinforced with people flocking from West Berlin to join the demonstrations, who were easily identified because of their smarter attire. Construction workers were less obvious than they were the previous days as they had come along in normal clothes. As the morning wore on, there was widespread unrest, with much anger aimed at the police; with officers beaten up and thrown into the canal, police stations ransacked and set on fire, police cars overturned and torched and shops looted. The Soviet flag was torn down from the Brandenburg Gate, which would not have gone down well with Ulbricht's Soviet masters.

Anticipating trouble, Police units had been bussed in from nearby areas and *Vopo* riot police had been deployed around the city, with Soviet tanks appearing in the early hours of the morning. The crowds of workers grew to around 40,000 and began shouting again for free elections and a reunited Germany. In the afternoon, the huge crowds heading towards Potsdamer Platz were met by dozens of Soviet T-34 tanks. Lavrenty Beria, Stalin's brutal enforcer and one of the senior Soviets hoping to succeed him, had flown to Berlin during the night and took over delivering the government's response. Demonstrators began pelting the Soviet tanks with stones, bricks and bottles and some even tried to climb on top of a tank, which was enough of an excuse for the East German police and Soviet troops to open fire into the crowd, killing as many as 300 protesters over the course of the day. Many more were arrested. The two youths pictured throwing stones were both tracked down by the

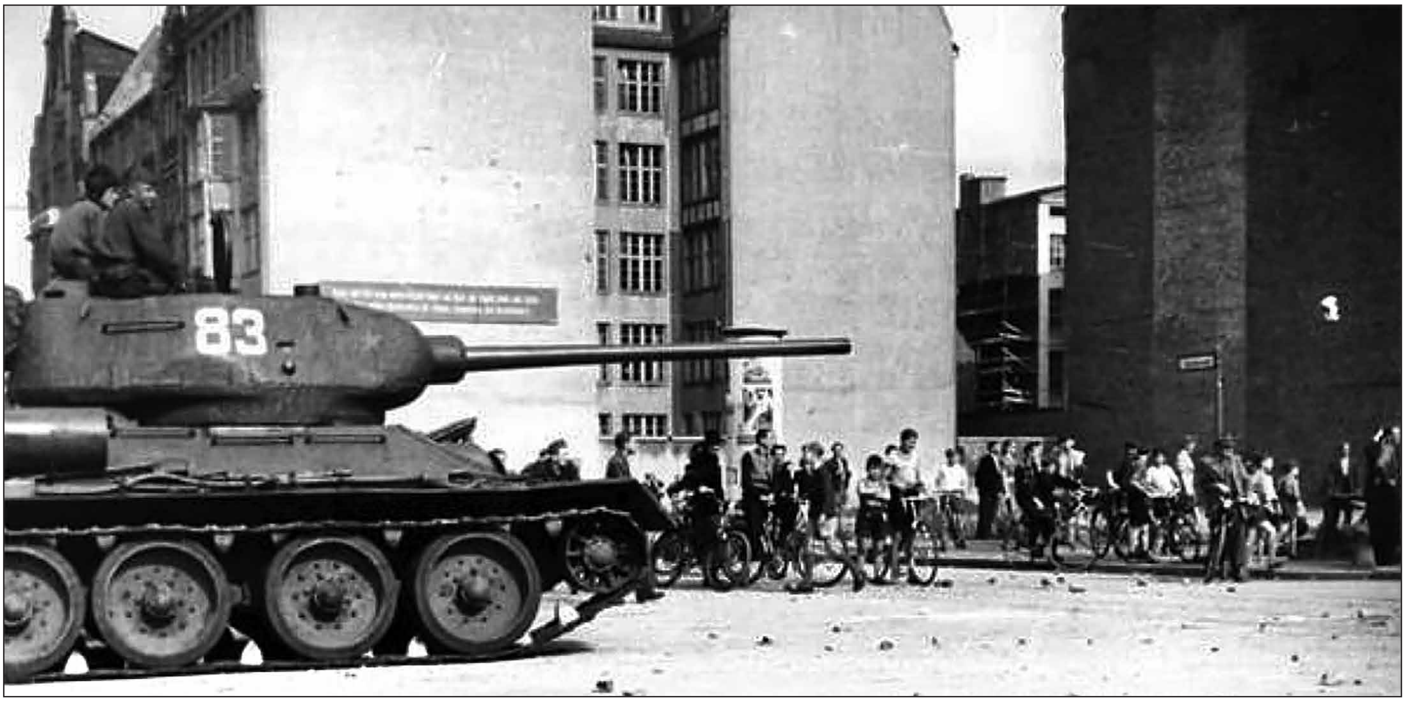

Youths throw stones at Soviet T-34 tanks, East Berlin, 17 June 1953. (Albert Grandolini)

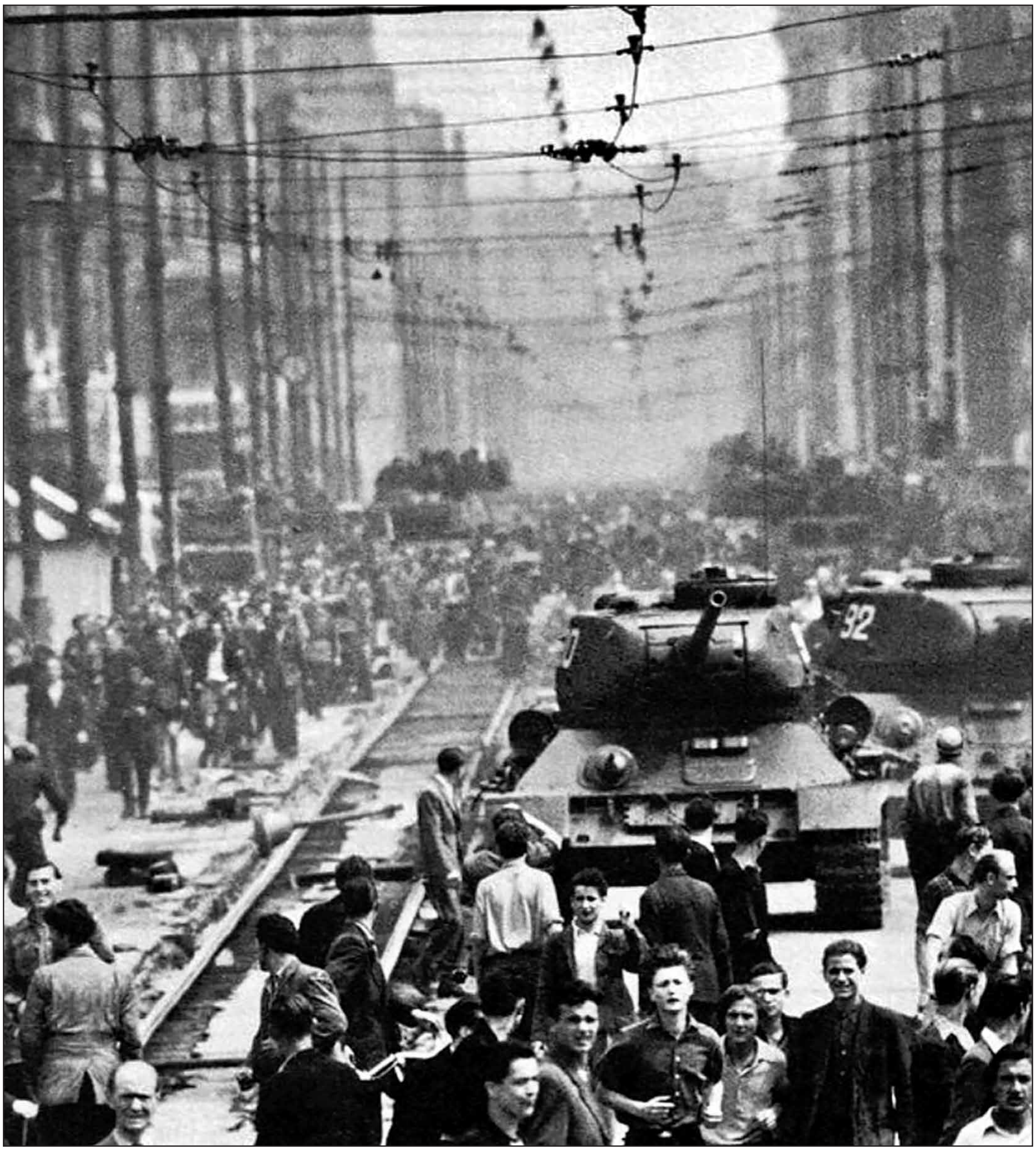


As the tanks approach, the youths move in front of the tank, stopping its progress, East Berlin, 17 June 1953. (Albert Grandolini)



They finally climb on top of the tank to remonstrate with the tank commander, East Berlin, 17 June 1953. (Albert Grandolini)

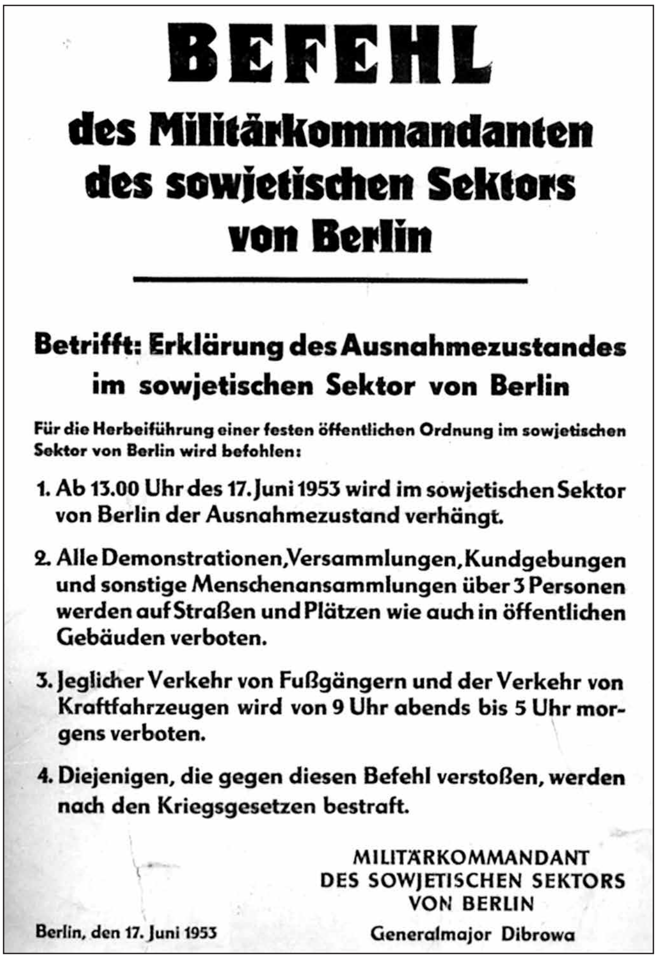

Soviet T-34 tanks on the streets of East Berlin, 17 June 1953. (Albert Grandolini)


Large crowds of civilians in and amongst the Soviet tanks, 17 June 1953. (Albert Grandolini)

Stasi and underwent harsh interrogation. Hans Joachim Maitre was sentenced to a year in prison for 'incitement to turmoil', while Erwin Kalisch received 3 years 'as a servant of monopoly capital'. Both fled the DDR before the Wall went up.[9]

The SMA (Soviet Military Authority) declared a State of Emergency at 1300 with a 2100 to 0500 curfew and any gathering of more than three people was banned on pain of being shot.

After the tanks had secured the sector borders to stop protesters escaping to West Berlin, squads of the *Kasernierte Volkspolizei* (*KVP*, the East German paramilitary police and forerunner of the National People's Army, the *NVA*) moved in to brutally suppress the riots, using batons and live ammunition to break up the crowd that had swelled to almost 100,000. The relatively high casualties were probably a result of the inexperience of the East German police, who had not had to deal with mass civil disorder before. It is estimated that as many as 200 East German police used the cover of the riots to defect to the West. By early evening,



BEFEHL

des Militärkommandanten
des sowjetischen Sektors
von Berlin

Betrifft: Erklärung des Ausnahmezustandes
im sowjetischen Sektor von Berlin

Für die Herbeiführung einer festen öffentlichen Ordnung im sowjetischen Sektor von Berlin wird befohlen:

1. Ab 13.00 Uhr des 17. Juni 1953 wird im sowjetischen Sektor von Berlin der Ausnahmezustand verhängt.
2. Alle Demonstrationen, Versammlungen, Kundgebungen und sonstige Menschenansammlungen über 3 Personen werden auf Straßen und Plätzen wie auch in öffentlichen Gebäuden verboten.
3. Jeglicher Verkehr von Fußgängern und der Verkehr von Kraftfahrzeugen wird von 9 Uhr abends bis 5 Uhr morgens verboten.
4. Diejenigen, die gegen diesen Befehl verstoßen, werden nach den Kriegsgesetzen bestraft.

MILITÄRKOMMANDANT
DES SOWJETISCHEN SEKTORS
VON BERLIN
Generalmajor Dibrowa

Berlin, den 17. Juni 1953

The order from the Soviet military commander declaring the State of Emergency for the Soviet sector of Berlin, issued at noon of the 17 June 1953 and broadcast on DDR radio. (Archive of Social Democracy Bonn)

ORDER

of the Military Commander of the Soviet Sector of Berlin

Subject: Declaration of a State of Emergency in the Soviet sector of Berlin

For the establishment of a firm public order in the Soviet sector of Berlin is ordered:

1. From 1 p.m. on the 17 June 1953, a state of emergency is imposed in the Soviet sector of Berlin.
2. All demonstrations, meetings, rallies and other crowds of people over three people are prohibited in streets and squares as well as in public buildings.
3. All traffic of pedestrians and the traffic of motor vehicles is prohibited from 9 a.m. to 5 a.m.
4. Those who violate this order will be punished under the war laws [martial law].

MILITARY COMMANDANT
OF THE SOWJETIAN [Soviet] SECTOR OF BERLIN
Major General Dibrowa[10]

Berlin, 17 June 1953

the momentum had been lost, the protesters had been dispersed, and most of the ringleaders had been arrested, disappearing into *Stasi* interrogation centres and prisons, many never to see the light of day again. At least 18 people were sentenced to death and over a thousand were imprisoned for long periods.

It is estimated that as many as 500,000 workers went on strike on the 17 June across the whole of East Germany, the vast majority taking part in some form of demonstration. Unrest was not limited to Berlin – it took place in cities all over East Germany, such as Dresden, Halle, Magdeburg and Leipzig and even reached rural areas, where Party buildings and officials were attacked. Much of East German industry was brought to a standstill. While the main violence was to end that day, unrest in many factories lasted for longer. For most East German workers, their social and political lives were centred around their place of employment, and this worked against the authorities, allowing the unrest to simmer into July, with martial law finally being called off on 11 June. Apart from the empty space at numerous dinner tables around the country, there was little evidence that this unprecedented uprising had ever taken place.

During all the trouble, the *SED* leadership was under Soviet protection at the Soviet Army HQ, although the Soviet leadership treated Ulbricht and his team with contempt for having allowed such protests to take place. As was the norm in communist regimes, the *SED* leadership cooked up an 'alternative fact' version of the incident, claiming that fascist 'agent provocateurs' were to blame for the attempted 'fascist coup', at the behest of the Americans and 'the warmongers' in Bonn. They even claimed there were US officers in full uniform directing the rioters, linking their involvement with the Korean War, which was coming to a close across the other side of the world. Despite tight press controls in the DDR, Berlin's unusual multi-national status meant that the world learnt about the violence in the next morning's newspapers. US President Eisenhower was swift to condemn the Soviet's actions, stating that they contradicted all the propaganda that said the people of East Germany were happy with their communist government and the brutal suppression of the demonstrations were '*a good lesson on the meaning of communism*'.

Political Shake Up

The disturbances had made Ulbricht's position with his Soviet masters very shaky, only having support from a few hardliners. However, his opposition in Berlin was weak, and Ulbricht held on, delaying any decision by tying the committee up in procedural knots. Soon after, Ulbricht and Grotewohl headed to Moscow to learn, along with leaders from other satellite states, that Beria had been arrested, 'ambushed' by Khrushchev at a Party meeting. Beria was keen to have a re-unified and peaceful Germany and had campaigned in Moscow against Ulbricht's strict policies as he saw them making German reunification *less* likely. His crime, however, was focusing on reunification at any cost, even if it was *not* under a socialist banner. Following the unrest in Berlin, he was a convenient scapegoat and on 26 June he was arrested. In a typical Soviet denunciation, was accused of 'criminal anti-party and anti-governmental activities' and being an 'agent of imperialism'. One of history's most brutal enforcers was executed on 23 December 1953.

Khrushchev's move on Beria helped propel him to the top of the Party, filling the void left by Stalin's death earlier that year, and was also Ulbricht's unlikely saviour. He had lost his biggest enemy in Moscow and while the Kremlin reeled in the shock of Beria's arrest and subsequent execution, Ulbricht returned to Berlin, wrong footed his opponents and took full advantage of their weakness to further strengthen his position. With tacit approval from the Kremlin, he purged the *SED* leadership of his remaining enemies, the Soviets content with the stability this brought to East Germany, unlike the turmoil in other satellite states following Stalin's death.

The post-uprising purge spread to anyone who had supported or participated in the events of June 1953 and thousands were arrested and imprisoned, with some 200 being executed. It was clear that the *SED* were going to rule East Germany with an iron fist, and with the backing of Soviet military might, setting a precedent for later interventions into Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and what would become known as the Brezhnev Doctrine. The realities of a communist regime were becoming clear to the citizens of East Germany and watchers from around the world.

The *SED* leadership were rattled by the events of June 1953 and recognised that the citizens were overdue some good news. During the rest of June and July, the *SED* announced a whole raft of populist changes; a U-turn on work norms, a reinstatement of subsidised train fares for workers, improved pensions and benefits, a liberalisation of sick pay policy, better working conditions, fewer power cuts and a shift in production priorities from heavy industry to consumer goods. Lots of bold statements, but would they materialise and if they did, would they be enough to placate a very discontented workforce?

Western Taunts

On 4 August 1953, the FRG announced that 17 June would be a national holiday in West Germany, as a direct challenge to their communist neighbours and to commemorate the deaths of the protesters. It remained a holiday in the West until 1990, when 3 October took over as the 'Day of German Unity' – celebrating the German reunification. As another dig at their communist neighbours, the West Berlin government renamed Charlottenburger Chaussee, one of Berlin's most iconic avenues that ran from the Siegessäule (Victory Column) to the Brandenburg Gate, as Straße des 17. Juni (17th June Street).

3

SECRET BERLIN

Berlin's place at the frontline of the new Cold War meant that it was crucial to be able to observe the activities of would-be opponents. As a result, the city was teeming with spies of every persuasion. The city also played host to some of the most audacious intelligence operations of the Cold War.

All the main players maintained intelligence stations in the city, along with the Military Liaison Missions (MLMs) and garrisons for the four Allied occupying powers. With relatively free movement across the sector borders pre-1961, Berlin was ideal for spying on each other, with a ready supply of paid and unpaid informers willing to cross sectors and ply their trade, sometimes working for both sides at the same time. The Four Powers also had the right to cross into each other's sectors unhindered, albeit in official vehicles and/or in uniform. As well as social visits (theatres, restaurants and shopping), the garrisons undertook 'flag flying tours', where immaculately turned-out military police drove around in jeeps or staff cars, just because they could. Apart from exercise of their rights of access, these overt visits could actually provide valuable intelligence, spotting various military units going about their daily routines.

The American OSS (Office of Strategic Services and the forerunner to the CIA) entered the city on 4 July 1945 along with the main US forces, and established their headquarters at Föhrenweg 19/21 in Dahlem, Zehlendorf, a quiet residential street just off Kronprinzenallee, the wide boulevard that would be renamed Clayallee in 1949, after General Lucius Clay, the hero of the Berlin Airlift, and home to the main US military compound. Föhrenweg 19/21 is an imposing but rather austere building, designed by Hitler's architect Albert Speer in 1936, and used by Field Marshall Wilhelm Keitel during the war. The American spies chose it because it had 33 rooms, many of which were located in two underground levels and it had been designed to be bomb proof, with 18" (45cm) thick steel reinforced floors and walls, and its own escape tunnel. It was a bunker hidden in a suburban street. They would move to the main US compound on Clayallee in August 1954. The British Secret Intelligence Service (often mistakenly described as MI6) entered the city with British forces at the same time and initially set up shop in the complex of buildings on Fehrbelliner Platz in the Charlottenburg Wilmersdorf district in West Berlin. They would move to the better-known Olympic Stadium complex in the early 1950s, where they would share a building with BRIXMIS. The Soviets had established themselves in a sprawling mini city at Zossen/Wünsdorf, just south of Berlin, and the KGB maintained a sizeable operation there, as well as in the city at the SMAD headquarters at Lichtenberg, in the district of Karlshorst.

Disinformation

In the immediate post-war years, the East Germans were still finding their feet under the tutelage and close supervision of their Soviet masters. The DDR was a new state, only coming into existence on 7 October 1949, and zealously protected their socialist paradise, stamping out any dissident behaviour with typical German efficiency. It was very easy to fall foul of the DDR's oppressive laws, where political opposition, unruly behaviour, saying the wrong thing, being related to the wrong person or simply being 'different' could be enough to lead to imprisonment. Being blind to recent history, the Soviets opened up former Nazi concentration camps and created new 'Special Camps' throughout the Soviet zone (known to the Germans as the *Sowjetzone* or the *Sowjetische Besatzungzone*) to house dissidents, troublemakers, and political prisoners, using a similar model to Stalin's infamous Gulags. In the decade after the end of the war, hundreds of thousands were incarcerated and tens of thousands died.

Things were very different in West Berlin, which operated under Western standards of justice, administered by the respective Military Governors, and freedom of speech, expression, sexuality and belief blossomed. The porous sector borders meant that news of these prison camps reached the West and prompted several protest groups to set up in West Berlin to attempt to keep track of dissidents through the prison system, identify those who had died and publicise their fate in the Western media.

One such group was *Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit* (*KgU*, Fighting Group against Inhumanity), led by Rainer Hildebrandt.[1] The *KgU* became a clearing house for information on the huge numbers of political prisoners held in the East, and they kept lists of names of those imprisoned and those who had perished in the harsh conditions, or executed by the Soviets. Their offices had a constant flow of family members, fellow activists and released prisoners, which helped build a true picture of what was going on in the *Sowjetzone*. Some of the visitors were disaffected members of the *Vopos*, *Stasi* and *NVA* including many defectors.[2] This diverse group of people would later prove to be a useful source of intelligence for the West.

Around the same time, the CIA were waking up to the threat of Soviet '*Dezinformatsiya*', or 'Disinformation', known in CIA circles as 'Political Warfare'. *Dezinformatsiya* or '*Deza*' was not a new concept, it had been preached by Marx and Clausewitz and fully embraced by 'Iron' Feliks Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the Cheka, the forerunner of the KGB. He had the foresight to create a *Deza* department as far back as 1923, and it developed into an entire bureaucracy dedicated to bending the truth. The technique really matured after the Second World War, with increasingly sophisticated, aggressive and targeted operations conducted by both sides.

George Kennan, the US diplomat who famously characterised the Soviet mentality in his Long Telegram of February 1946 and again in his anonymous *Sources of Soviet Conduct* article of July 1947, had created the secretive but influential Policy Planning Staff (known as S/P) under US Secretary of State George C. Marshall. In April 1948, he produced another influential report called *The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare*, which detailed the threat and opportunity of conducting overt and covert 'political warfare' against the Soviet Union and her 'satellites' and/or 'client' states.[3] This resulted in the National Security Council issuing NSC 10/2 on 18 June 1948, which created the Office of Special Projects (OSP) within the CIA and authorised them to undertake covert action against their new adversary.[4] The OSP was renamed the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) in September 1948 in order to further disguise its true purpose, and was headed by OSS veteran, Frank Wisner.

This new set up was perfect for the new fast-moving world of Cold War intelligence gathering, where the shadows were constantly shifting, and nothing was quite what it seemed. The officers at the CIA's Berlin Station, known as the Berlin Operating Base (BOB) saw the work that was being done by the *KgU* and their sister organisation, the *Untersuchungsausschuss freiheitlicher Juristen* (*UfJ*, the Investigation Committee of Free Jurists), and took them under their wing. In March 1949, CIA headquarters in Langley approved Operation GRAVEYARD which was to provide funding to the *KgU* with the following objective:

> To harass and weaken the Soviet administration of East German (including East Berlin) and the East German puppet regime, to help retard East German economic development, to help promote and sustain popular anti-communist resistance within East Germany, and to help expose conditions within the Soviet zone to the Western world.[5]

'Graveyard' became 'Earthenware', which then became operations 'DTLINEN' and 'LCCASSOCK', which would run in one form or another until 1961, directed by Station Chief Bill Harvey and the team at the CIA's BOB.[6] The *KgU* had already had some success with getting their stories of brutal Soviet prison camps into international media, documenting examples of East German police brutality and using unconventional tactics, compiling lists of Soviet informers and broadcasting their names on RIAS in a sort of 'name and shame' operation. They went on the offensive with a graffiti campaign, where youths were sent over to the Soviet sector to paint large Fs on walls and windows, F standing for *Freiheit* (Freedom) and/or *Feindschaft* (Adversity). This was a risky act, because if caught, the perpetrators would face long prison sentences and some were even executed. In a bizarre response to the graffiti campaign, the East German authorities sent out workers to convert the 'F' into '*FDJ*', the initials of the *Freie Deutsche Jugend*, the Party's youth wing. The *SED* did their best to counter the *KgU*'s activity and made an example of anybody they caught to deter others. They were also not beyond trying to kidnap staff members living and working in West Berlin and smuggling them into the East where they could be 'dealt with' properly. In 1952 the *Stasi* kidnapped Walter Linse, a West Berlin based *UfJ* lawyer, interrogated and tortured him to reveal *UfJ* informers and executed him as an example to other *UfJ* activists. The *SED* also published the *KgU* and *UfJ* leader's home addresses and made public accusations that they were West German agents working for the Gehlen Organisation, the forerunner of the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (*BND*, West German Federal Intelligence Service), when all along it was the CIA they were working for. That said, from 1949 until 1961, the *KgU*'s legitimate refugee and prison monitoring operations were a major source of intelligence on what was going on in the *Sowjetzone*.[7] However, with CIA backing and direction, the *KgU* would go on to become a major disinformation producing machine.

A separate team, *Aktionsgruppe B*, was created to establish a fake public relations agency/publishing house as a CIA front disguised as an actual business – Cramer Werbung (*Werbung* meaning advertising) and later Äquator Verlag GmbH (Verlag meaning publishing house). Using skilled forgers, they embarked on a programme of disinformation that plagued the East Berlin authorities for years. Their first success was to sabotage the high-profile World Youth Festival, a prestige event organised by the *SED/FDJ*, which was taking place in Berlin from 5 to 19 August 1951, hosting youth delegations from communist parties all over the world.[8] Cramer Werbung produced several forged editions of *Junge Welt*, the *FDJ*'s daily newspaper, with carefully written stories intended to destabilise the socialist spirit the *SED* were trying so hard to engender. A total of 180,000 copies were distributed across East Berlin during the event, looking to all intents and purposes identical to the real newspaper.

From this early success, an extraordinary range of items flowed from the forger's desks, some official looking but standalone brochures or leaflets, others careful forgeries of popular DDR publications. Almost every corner of DDR society was targeted:[9]

Unique Publications:

- *Die Wahrheit – The Truth*, a general interest magazine
- *Def Kämpfer* – newsletter aimed at the DDR's Armed Forces
- *Der Parteiarbeiter – The Party Worker*
- *Geist und Leben* – cultural news
- *Elternhaus und Schule* – a magazine for parents and students

Popular forgeries:

- *Die Wochenpost* – a popular weekly
- *Neuer Weg* – the official *SED* publication
- *Neue Zeit* – the official Soviet publication in the DDR

- *Der Wegweiser* – the magazine of one the DDR's nominal 'opposition' parties
- *Die Tribüne* – a trade union journal
- *Der Freie Bauer* – a farming magazine
- *Die Frau von Heute* – a women's magazine
- *Junge Welt* – the *FDJ* newspaper
- *Die Volkspolizei* – the *Vopos*' in-house magazine

The operation produced staggering numbers of items, all of which had to be designed and printed in secret, and then they had to be distributed. Crossing the sector border with boxes full of leaflets was far too dangerous, so they came up with an innovative solution: large neoprene balloons were filled with helium and a quantity of leaflets or magazines was slung underneath. After waiting for a westerly wind, the balloons were released, carrying their payload over into East Berlin. The team from *Aktionsgruppe B* devised a clever release mechanism which involved a fuse burning down, timed to drop the material when it was safely over in the East. At the peak of the operation, some 15,000 balloons a month were being sent over and the *KgU* operated three balloon distribution bases right up until 1960 – all funded by the CIA.[10] They also built up a sizeable mailing list, with their fake material being very popular beyond the DDR in other Soviet satellite states.

The forgeries were deployed to influence East German politics – after the 1953 workers' riots, they fanned the fire of insurrection and added to the confusion by faking an official *SED* magazine, giving pseudo-official advice and during the DDR's so-called 'elections', they sent out millions of official looking leaflets exposing the election as a sham.

The disinformation could also be very creative and mischievous. *Aktionsgruppe B* developed a concept called 'Administrative Harassment', what would later be christened 'dirty tricks'. Clever official looking forgeries were sent out to businesses and organisations to cause maximum disruption. Orders were received for non-existing customers, and orders for real customers were mysteriously cancelled. State run shops received instructions to lower prices on the goods they sold, leading to queues of eager East German bargain hunters. The dirty tricks were not just for the domestic audience – international trading partners were sent fake letters saying their East German contacts had to stop buying from them as the DDR could not afford it anymore (which was not far from the truth). To try to destabilise the establishment from within, forged letters and official looking booklets were sent to *SED* Party members, prominent businessmen, scientists and senior military personnel, outing certain officials as former Nazis. The fake documents contained their *NSDAP* membership numbers and joining dates for authenticity. Some of those named had been SS members and one was even a member of Hitler's personal bodyguard.

In addition to forgeries, the *KgU* also undertook direct action to try to disrupt the East German establishment, known as *S-Aktionen* or *Störaktionen*. The *SED* were fond of large parades and 'demonstrations' so the CIA developed 'stink bombs' that the *KgU* agents could let off in the crowd, thus spoiling the event. They sabotaged industrial equipment by substituting cleaning fluids with acid and left special sharp objects around military installations to puncture tyres, all designed to irritate and disrupt.[11]

With so much CIA money swilling around ($60-70,000 a month at 1950s prices) and relatively little oversight, it was always going to end badly. The beginning of the end came when the editors at *Äquator Verlag GmbH* began producing their own magazine titles, rather than just producing forgeries. Some of these went on to be quite successful in their own right, albeit entirely bankrolled by the CIA. They produced a salacious gossip magazine called *Klatsch*, which planted ridiculous and completely fabricated stories with a subversive slant, and it became very popular. They also produced an astrology magazine, feeding a demand in the East for horoscopes, which were officially frowned upon, and *Die Frau*, a glossy women's magazine, which began to take on a life of its own, even launching a dating service. The straw that broke the camel's back was a magazine called *Schlagzeug* (*Jazz in wort und bild*), feeding the insatiable demand for anything to do with American jazz music. It featured big-name American stars, with genuine content mixed in with the occasional subversive article, and became very popular with *FDJ* members, starved of 'cool' reading material and in the FRG too, with the West German hipsters buying far more copies than in the East. The publishing operation had become a sizeable concern, with printing presses producing around 75,000 items a month, a chemical factory to produce the gas for the helium balloons, warehouses, logistics operations to acquire and move tons of paper, full time staff of 32 plus freelancers, including one man whose job it was to fill the helium balloons. The staff enjoyed excellent conditions and benefits.

The editors began to complain that the subversive content required by their CIA paymasters was detrimental to their readership and their brand and viewed the spy operations as 'dirty'. They forgot that the leaflets and magazines were a means to an end, rather than a journalistic product in their own right, and unsurprisingly, their CIA handlers were less than impressed. In 1958, the CIA reviewed its covert action objectives in Europe and decided to cut back funding, so given the breakdown in the relationship with the *KgU*, it was an easy decision to terminate their support. The forging, production and distribution operation was wound down during 1960 and by 1 January 1961 (just before JFK took office and 8 months before the Wall went up), had ceased. LCCASSOCK was officially terminated on 31 May 1961.

The East Germans and Soviets did not take all this trickery lying down and as the CIA's operation was winding down, the KGB and *HVA* (the *Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung*, or Main Directorate for Reconnaissance, the foreign intelligence service of the Ministry for State Security, or *Stasi*) in East Berlin began ramping up their *Dezinformatsiya* operations, targeting US institutions and interests all over the world with some success. There's evidence that the Soviets were well aware of the forged material coming from West Berlin, and that it was funded by the CIA, but could do little to counter the deluge of material crossing over the border. The Soviet Bloc would take the concept to a whole new level of sophistication all through the Cold War, while the Americans moved on to other strategies.[12]

Berlin Tunnel

One of the boldest operations of the Cold War took place in Berlin during the early 1950s. The Berlin Tunnel became legendary in intelligence circles because of the sheer nerve of those involved, the logistics needed, the intelligence it yielded and how it was betrayed.

In October 1948, the Soviets inexplicably changed all of their ciphers overnight, throwing Western intelligence into darkness, a day known in intelligence circles as Black Friday. Western intelligence had successfully been breaking Soviet codes since 1943 via the Venona project, but that source of real-time intelligence was now gone.[13] It would later be discovered that the Venona secret had been betrayed by American translator William Weisband and by British spy Kim Philby, who worked for SIS. NATO was desperately worried about a Soviet surprise attack, a 'Bolt out of the Blue' (BOOB) strike, a Soviet ‘Pearl Harbor’, and needed to find another source to resume the close monitoring of Soviet intentions and activity. HUMINT (Human Intelligence, that is spies on the ground) was hard to get because of the all-seeing police states operating in the Soviet Bloc. The solution lay underground.

The British had had some success with tapping Soviet phone lines in the Four Power city of Vienna, the capital city of Austria, which was split four ways like Berlin. They dug several tunnels under roads and buildings and tapped into underground telephone lines that either came close to or crossed the sector border in Operation Silver. Between 1948 and 1952, the Vienna tunnel operation yielded masses of intelligence on the Soviet Order of Battle in Austria and in other Soviet satellites, along with Soviet military intentions in the dangerous days of the early Cold War (which included the start of the Korean War).

Seeing the British success in Vienna, the CIA began to explore whether a similar operation could be mounted in Berlin, which was a communications hub for all the Soviet satellite states. Using a network of agents inside the East Berlin Post Office, they acquired detailed plans of the Soviet sector’s telephone system, identifying several locations that were close enough to the Western sectors. One was in the British sector, near Anhalter Station but its central location made covert operations impossible. The other location was down in the American sector next to the tiny East German village of Altglienicke, just across the sector border from an equally sleepy West Berlin village of Rudow, both effectively suburbs of Berlin. This location looked promising because the cables ran about 27in (69cm) under a reasonably busy road called Schönefelder Chausee, which connected East Berlin to its main civilian airport at Schönefeld. The only way to get at the cables would be by underground tunnel.[14]

The project gained some traction at Langley and in London and was christened PBJOINTLY by the CIA and Stopwatch by SIS. The teams referred to their collective effort as Operation Gold, that is, one up from Vienna’s Silver. The British would provide the technical expertise gained from Operation Silver, while the Americans would provide the resources. It was going to be an operation of epic proportions. However, it had to be undertaken under conditions of total secrecy, so knowledge of the overall objective was kept on a ‘need-to-know’ basis, with multiple levels of security clearance and cover stories within cover stories.[15]

The Americans began to covertly survey the site from the air and compared the images to the old phone network and utilities plans supplied by their agents in East Berlin. The resulting air-photogrammetry study determined that the tunnel would need to be 1,476 ft (0.4 km) long, far longer than anything Silver had used, and they would need to build a structure to disguise the digging, perhaps a warehouse style building. As the ground there was sandy, they realised early on that some underground structure would be needed to support the weight of soil above them. Mining engineers recommended that a specially designed roof shield should be used to protect the diggers and stop the tunnel collapsing on top of them, and the tunnel walls should be lined with specially designed steel liner plates.

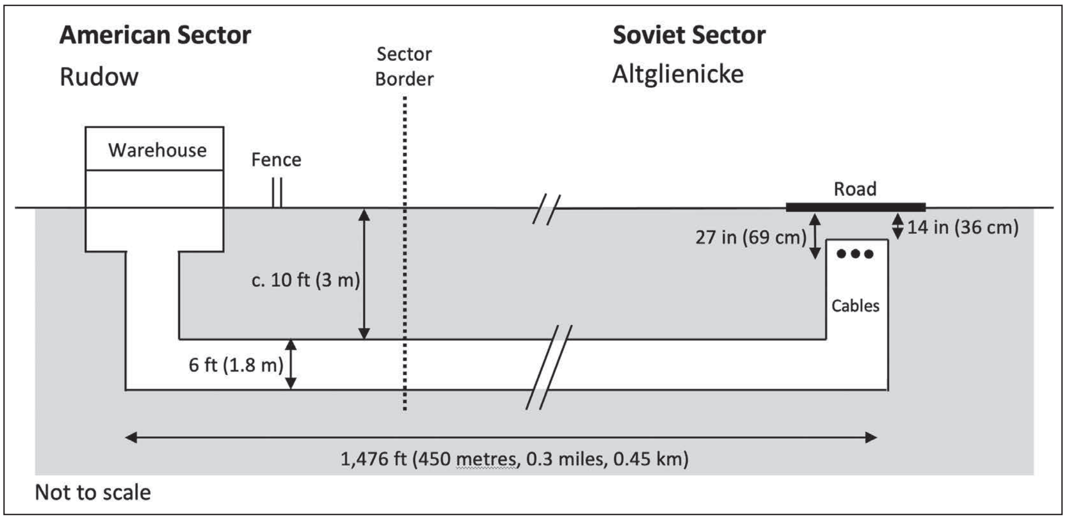
By August 1953, the team had preliminary approval to proceed, based on a cost estimate of $500,000 (a woeful underestimation), excluding the cost of the warehouse, and the plan was to have it finished by late summer 1954. In December 1953, there was a detailed planning meeting in London for all the parties involved, where it was agreed that the US would pay for the warehouse and main tunnel, while the UK would dig the vertical shaft up to the cables and make the actual tap. Apart from the tunnel itself, the back of house operation in Berlin, London and Washington DC was huge. A small linguistics and intelligence team would be based at Rudow to scan the intercepts for evidence of hostile intent, but then the tapes of the recordings would be sent on for further processing. The project would require:

- Specialist surveyors, mining and structural engineers, diggers and the highly skilled telecoms specialists who would tap into the actual cables without alerting the Soviets
- Miles of cables
- Hundreds of tape recorders to record the phone and signals traffic
- Signals officers to monitor and maintain the equipment
- Logistics personnel to move the tapes from West Berlin to West Germany and then on to London and Washington DC
- Dozens of transcribers (fluent in Russian, German and other European languages), collators and linguists on site in Berlin and at the two proposed processing centres in London (the Main Processing Unit or MPU for voice traffic) and Washington DC (the Technical Processing Unit or TPU for data, that is, telegraph, traffic)
- Intelligence analysts to review and act on the material
- Cryptographers to decode enciphered traffic
- Hundreds of clerks and typists

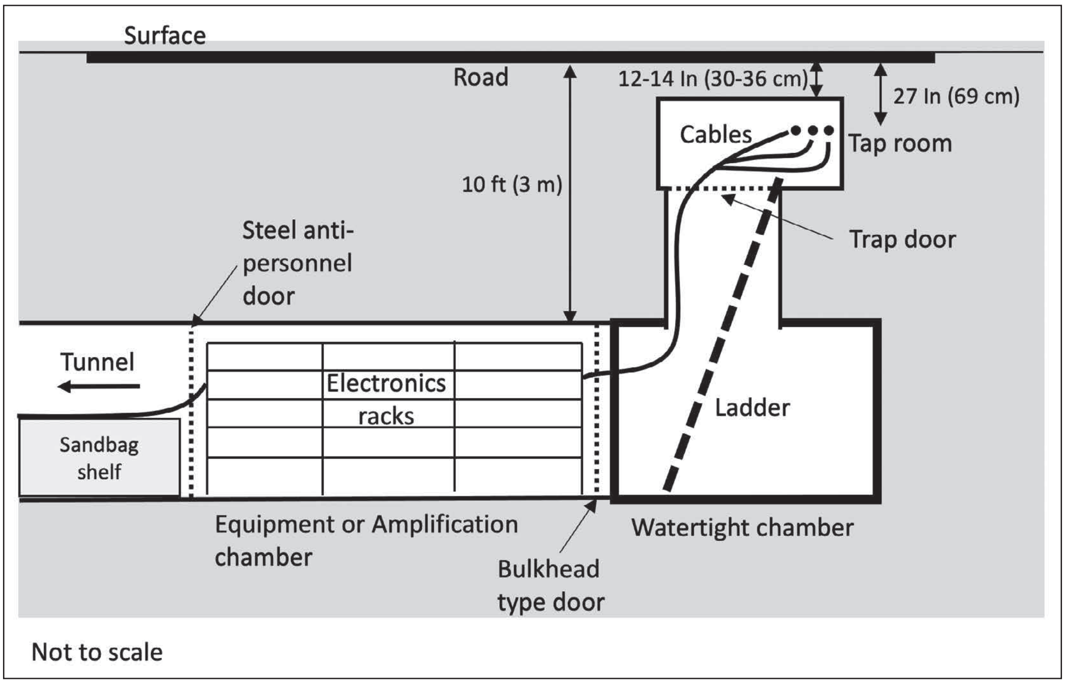
And all of this had to be conducted in total secrecy.

The only problem was that the whole operation had been betrayed to the Soviets before anybody had even lifted a shovel. At the December 1953 London planning meeting, the minutes were taken by a young SIS officer attached to Y Section, the Service’s intercept specialists. His name was George Blake, and he was a Soviet spy. Blake made an extra copy of the minutes and by the middle of January they were in the hands of the KGB. Discovering the tunnel project was a massive coup for Soviet intelligence, but it presented them with a huge dilemma. Since Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess defected in May 1951 (and their friend Kim Philby was side-lined from SIS because of their relationship), the Soviets did not have a source within British Intelligence, but their new asset, George Blake, gave them renewed hope. Blake had embraced communism and offered his services to the Soviets while imprisoned in a North Korean prison camp, having been captured in July 1950 while running the SIS station in the South Korean capital, Seoul. On his release from captivity in April 1953, Blake had been welcomed back into the fold at SIS, where he began his new double life, serving two masters. If the Soviets, or their East German clients, were to ‘discover’ the tunnel, then there was a good chance that their new star agent, codename Diomid, would be unmasked by the resulting counter-intelligence inquiry. The head of the KGB, Ivan Aleksandrovich Serov, made the brave decision to keep knowledge of the tunnel a closely guarded secret within the KGB in order to protect his source, even if it meant that sensitive material would be intercepted by the West. He was convinced that the value of Blake’s intelligence, and his future potential as he moved up in the service, easily outweighed the value of any secrets that could be lost. The cloak of secrecy was to be so deep that even the heads of the KGB and Soviet Army in Germany would be kept in the dark about the tunnel.

Preparations began in earnest on both sides of the Atlantic, with test sites being established to master the tunnelling techniques required. They would use a ‘shield’ to protect the diggers and as they moved forward, and the steel liner plates would be bolted together behind them. They also came up with an innovative solution to



Schematic showing the warehouse, the tunnel, the border, the cable location and road above it. (Author)



Schematic showing the position of the taps, the Amplification Chamber and the entrance to the tunnel. (Author)

dispose of the expected 3,000 tons (2,700 tonnes) of sandy soil. To quote the 1968 CIA report into the operation: they should '*dig a hole to put the dirt in*' and that was exactly what they did. They elected to build a warehouse-sized building over where the tunnel needed to be started and dig out a huge basement which could be used to store all the soil. The British developed a technique to dig the vertical shaft using a hollow steel box called the 'Mole', which had louvres in the top allowing a few centimetres of soil to be scraped out before the box was pushed a bit further towards the surface. Risk of subsidence was minimised by pumping a special grouting compound through plug holes in the steel plates, filling any voids. By July 1954, the concepts had been proven.

In January 1954, the US Army Berlin Command took out a ten-year lease on a nine acre (3.6 hectares) plot of farmland at the end of Schönbergweg in Rudow and began building their 'warehouse'. It was a standard box like building but had an unusually deep, 12 foot (3.7m) high cellar, which would be used to store the spoil from the tunnel. To help disguise the true purpose of the building, they decided to install a radar intercept station on the roof, which would explain the high security and unusual activity. The site was close to Schönefeld Airport, so some form of electronic eavesdropping was plausible – an overt secret installation to disguise a covert secret installation.

As the dig phase drew nearer, a huge logistical operation began to bring all the equipment and materials on site, including 125 tons of steel liner plates. The shipment came over by sea, crossed West Germany and then made the last leg across East Germany by train disguised in wooden crates marked 'radar'. The 'warehouse' had grown into a fairly substantial complex, with a barracks building, a large garage/motor pool building containing two diesel generators, all surrounded by two eight foot (2.4m) high chain link fences, topped with barbed wire, with a guard tower on each corner. The only access to the compound was via the main gate, which was heavily guarded, and further deliveries could be made to the back of the building, out of sight of the Soviets or East Germans. The compound needed to cater for all the creature comforts of the diggers, engineers, signals technicians and guards on site, including accommodation, catering and leisure.

Digging began on 2 September 1954 with tunnellers of the 8598th Engineer Support Team (wearing the uniforms of the US Army Signals Corps' 9539th Technical Service Unit) sinking a 16ft (4.9m) diameter shaft through the floor of the basement. Unfortunately, they hit a snag at this depth when they dug into an unexpected water table. The plan was to dig a 30ft (9m) shaft, which would leave 20ft (6m) of soil between the tunnel roof, the road and the Soviets/East Germans. The unexpected development left no alternative but to dig the horizontal tunnel with only 10ft (3m) of soil above it, thus making the whole operation far riskier.

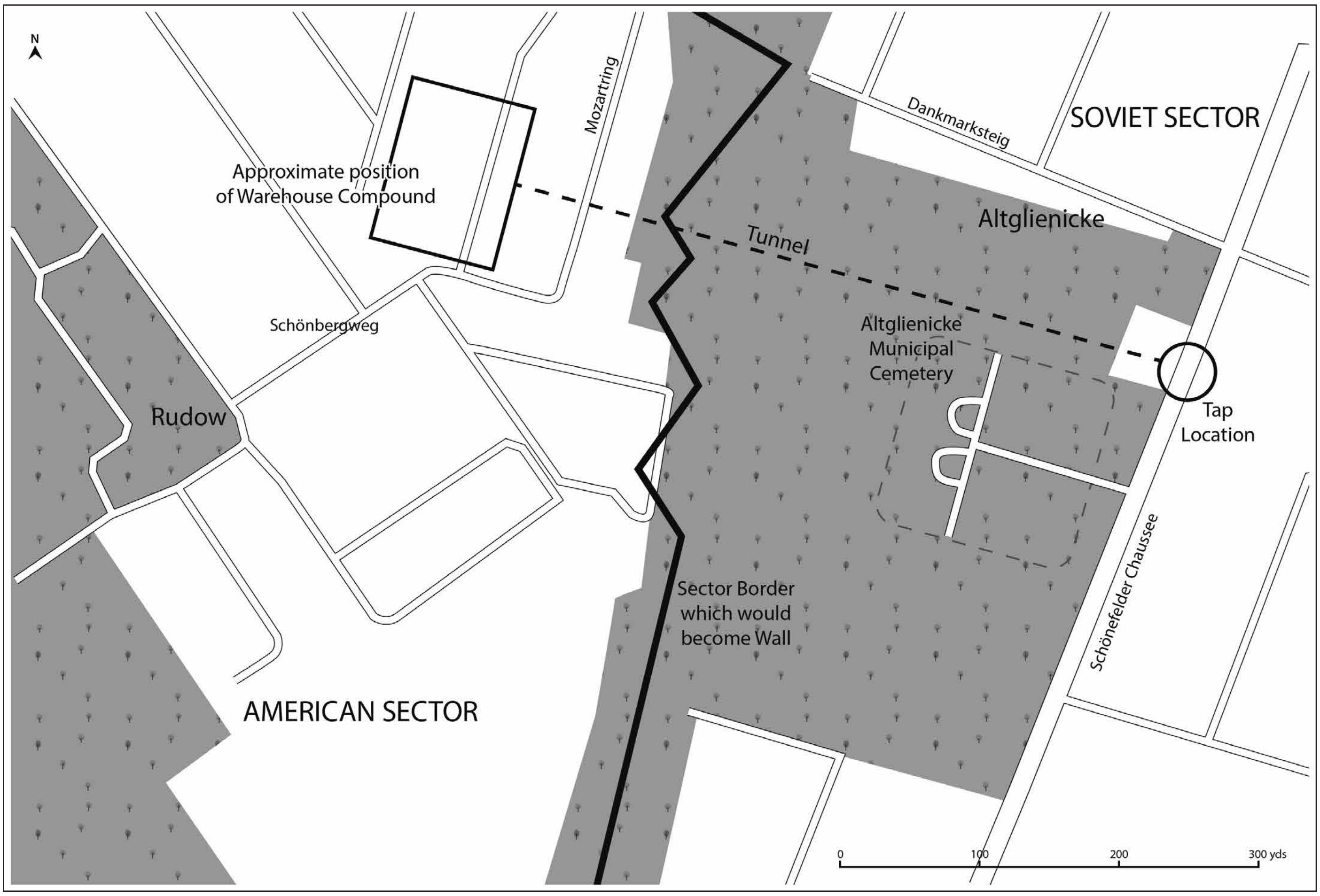
The tunnel itself was started on 11 October, with three eight-hour shifts working round-the-clock using entrenching tools to dig out the soil under the protection of the shield. All tasks had to be done by hand with no more than whispered speech between the diggers in order to avoid the noise being picked up by the East Germans above them. Spoil was sent back to the entrance shaft in sandbags on narrow rubber tyred wagons pulled by a battery-powered forklift truck with wooden tracks laid on the tunnel floor to guide it. The truck also took the liner plates and other equipment along to the digging face. With the liner plates in place, sandbags were then piled against the sides secured with steel cables to create a shelf on each side that would take the numerous cables and ducts along the tunnel's length. Air conditioners were installed with ducting running down the tunnel to the cutting face, improving the conditions for the diggers, plus it would be used later to cool all the electronics in the Equipment Chamber under the tapped cables. On a good day, the diggers managed to move about 11ft (3.4m) along, but as the tunnel needed to extend 1,476ft (450m), it was going to be a long and arduous task.

In the warehouse, the 'Ops Room' was created, with rows of tape recorders mounted on racking, ready to be connected to the tapping equipment including 150 American-made Ampex reel-to-reel tape recorders. There was also a covert observation post that looked across the fields to Schönefelder Chaussee to observe anybody snooping around above the tunnel and/or cable location. If anyone was spotted, the observers would turn on red lights in the tunnel or call on the field telephone so the workers could down tools until the coast was clear. This post had the added benefit of yielding useful intelligence from the traffic that went up and down the road to Schönefeld airfield. The observers could obtain Order of Battle (ORBAT) information on Soviet and East German military units and could gauge the relative importance of visitors arriving at Schönefeld by the size of their cavalcade and escort.

The cover story of the radar intercept station was developed with the installation of assorted pieces of equipment on the roof, some of it real, some of it completely bogus. For some time, the cables just dangled loose into the first floor of the building, but someone eventually decided that a fully functioning ELINT station close to Schönefeld (and other Soviet/East German military airbases in the area) would actually be quite useful, and so all the equipment was properly connected, and operators would sit behind consoles on the first floor intercepting and recording Soviet and East German radar signals.

By 28 February 1955, after six months of hard digging, the tunnel had arrived directly under the cables under Schönefelder Chaussee. The US Army diggers were sent back home, completely unaware of the true purpose of the tunnel they had all toiled over. They had excavated over 3,000 US tons (2,800 metric tonnes) entirely by hand and without alerting anybody on the surface. A team of Royal Engineers then took over. No.1 Specialist Team, Royal Engineers, had spent several months in isolation in a hangar at RAF Gatow, where they practiced using the Mole, only finding out the purpose of their mission as they were being trucked to Rudow. The British soldiers were given US style haircuts and US Signals Corps' uniforms to maintain the site's cover story.

The first job of the British engineers was to build a watertight chamber at the end of the tunnel, which would be the base for their ascent. They began digging upwards on 10 March 1955 with two people working inside the Mole at any one time: opening one of the louvres, scraping out the soil above it, closing the louvre, repeating the process with the next one and then using eight hydraulic jacks to push the Mole up a few inches and begin all over again. By 28 March, they had reached the cables and began carefully excavating a space around them. To protect the cable bundles, they built a concrete chamber around them, with a reinforced roof to give the chamber some protection from the vehicles above. The cables to be tapped were only 27in (69cm) below the surface of the road, and the chamber roof was a mere 14in (36cm) below. The footsteps of people walking along the side of the road could be heard, and the sound of a horse and cart, let alone a truck or tank, was deafening. It was an extraordinarily risky operation. The Royal Engineers had done their job and a team of experts from the top-secret Special Investigations Unit of the British General Post Office (GPO) research establishment



Location of the Berlin Tunnel (Map by George Anderson)

The Wire Tapping Process

- The tape recorders were activated automatically when a call or telegraphic transmission came through
- Each reel could take two hours of voice calls or six hours of telegraph signals and there were a team of technicians on hand to change over the reels as they were used
- The full reels were passed to the first-line analysts to listen and check for any 'Indications of Hostilities' (IOH), warning signs that hostile activity was imminent. They quickly identified the important lines and ignored the day-to-day traffic, although this would be transcribed and reviewed down the line. Even mundane conversations could reveal useful ORBAT information and contribute to the analysts' understanding of the bigger picture
- If the first-line analysts heard anything interesting, they would type up a quick summary and flag the recording for further examination
- Every call/message was logged, building up a pattern of the traffic – analysis of which was a useful intelligence practice in its own right, yielding valuable information and acting as an important barometer of an army's status[16]
- With the voice and data transmissions, Operation Gold had access to over 1,200 different communications channels. The maximum number of channels in use at any one time was around 500, and on average, 28 telegraphic and 121 voice circuits were recorded continuously
- The recording machines used more than 150 reels of tape a day
- The phone lines of the Soviet and East German signals units, who were responsible for the phone and telegraph systems, were also closely monitored for advance warning that the taps had been discovered
- Every day, a US Army driver would take the previous day's batch of voice tapes to RAF Gatow, where they would go on the daily flight to London and the MPU at Chester Terrace
- The data tapes went through an unnecessarily convoluted route to reach the TPU in Washington DC. A warehouse CIA officer in an unmarked car would rendezvous with a BOB officer in a secluded spot and hand over the day's reels. They would then be taken to BOB on Clayallee, where they would be locked in secure boxes. They would then be taken to Tempelhof under armed guard for their onward journey to the US

at Dollis Hill in London took over to make the actual taps. They were experts in the shadowy world of telephone interception and worked closely with MI5 and SIS, including on the Silver operations in Vienna.

To make the phone signals intelligible, they needed to be amplified, and that amplification needed to be done as close to the source as possible to avoid interference or signal degradation. At the end of the tunnel, the tunnellers built a special insulated Equipment Chamber, racked out and packed with banks of amplifiers, modulators, oscillators and other electronic wizardry, protected from dust and humidity and kept at a constant temperature. Cables were run from the Equipment Chamber back to the warehouse and the lines were fed through voltage stabilisers and more amplifiers in the basement, before being fed up to the Ops Room on the ground floor where they were connected to the rows of tape recorders.

The GPO engineers had to wait for a dry spell to avoid the risk of short-circuits and drops or spikes in the cable voltage that would have been detected by the Soviet signals troops but on 11 May 1955, they were able to start the delicate operation to make the first tap. The work was done in the early hours of the morning when the signals traffic was lower, and there was less chance of any blips in voltage being noticed. Intelligence analysts were poised in the Ops Room to review the first calls as they came through and sentries were in the observation point watching for any suspicious activity above ground. All kinds of sensors and microphones were placed in the tapping room, the Equipment Chamber and in the tunnel to monitor what was going on.

The techniques to tap into the lines were so secret that even the SIS and CIA officers on site were not allowed to see the complicated process. Each of the three main cables had around 196 individual strands of copper wire that needed to be separated and individually matched with a corresponding strand in the spur that went from the tapping room to the Equipment Chamber and the bank of amplifiers. Any drop in voltage could be detected by Soviet signals troops. This incredibly intricate operation was done while standing on a ladder or crouched in the tiny tapping room, only speaking in whispers, with vehicles rumbling along only 14 or so inches (30-40cm) above the heads of the technicians.

With the job completed with no snags or alerts, the intercepted calls started to flow into the Ops Room with no indication that the Soviets were aware of the tap. The volume of material being lifted from just this first cable was incredible, with a mixture of mundane day-to-day operational calls, idle chit chat and discussions between very senior officers. It was not long before a second trunk cable was successfully tapped on 21 May 1955, and then the third on 2 August 1955, and soon the tape recorders were working flat out. The logistics operation once a call came through was complex, though after a while it was operating like a well-oiled machine.

The first intelligence report from tunnel intercepts was issued on 6 June 1955 and was very well received in London and at Langley – the intelligence product was codenamed Regal and was only distributed to a select few to protect its source. Over time, the intercepts built into a comprehensive picture of GSFG (and to a lesser extent *NVA*) activity in East Germany including:

- GSFG ORBAT and combat readiness
- Morale
- Personnel issues
- Supply issues
- Manoeuvres and exercises
- Tactics
- Weapons systems
- New equipment; tanks, aircraft, missiles
- Shortages and deficiencies of equipment
- Problems with the East German transport infrastructure upon which GSFG relied
- Military and political developments in the other Soviet satellite states

Processing Regal

- Firstly, a team would transcribe the conversation in the original language, mostly Russian and German
- A second team would then translate it
- A third team of analysts would extract, compare, contrast, collate and combine information to build an overall picture of Soviet and East German activity
- Sensitive or important information underwent further analysis, with linguists and language specialists poring over the transcript, the translation and even the original recording, reading between the lines and looking for nuances, emphases and tone that would give extra context to the cold facts
- The analysts gradually built a 'who's who' of GSFG personnel with profiles of individual officers – after a while the operators could recognise different officers from just their voices
- Ample use of military acronyms, codenames eye wateringly foul language made translating harder – a glossary of Russian swear words was produced and circulated

- Developments of the Soviet nuclear programme
- Political developments back in Moscow
- General gossip and griping, which also was an indicator of morale

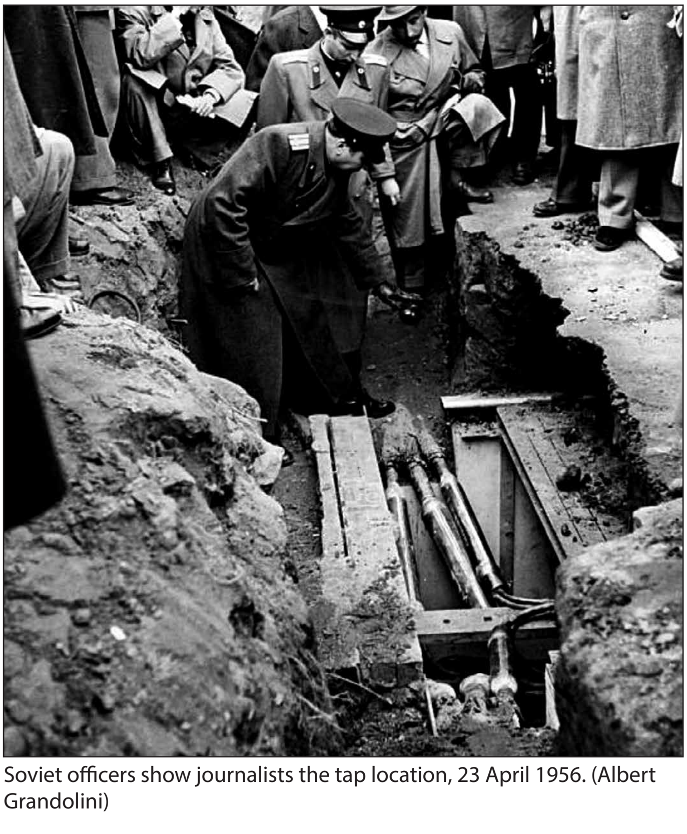
Washington TPU

- Using machines called 'Bumblebees', electronic pulses were recorded on magnetic tapes and converted the dots and dashes into readable text, outputting them onto long strips of paper like a ticker tape machine, of up to 4,000 ft (1,120 m) of paper tape a day
- The paper tapes were then translated, typed up and analysed. Anything of interest would be flagged and passed up the chain for further analysis
- The team quickly expanded to around 350 linguists, clerks and analysts
- The National Security Agency (NSA) were called in to decipher any messages that were encoded

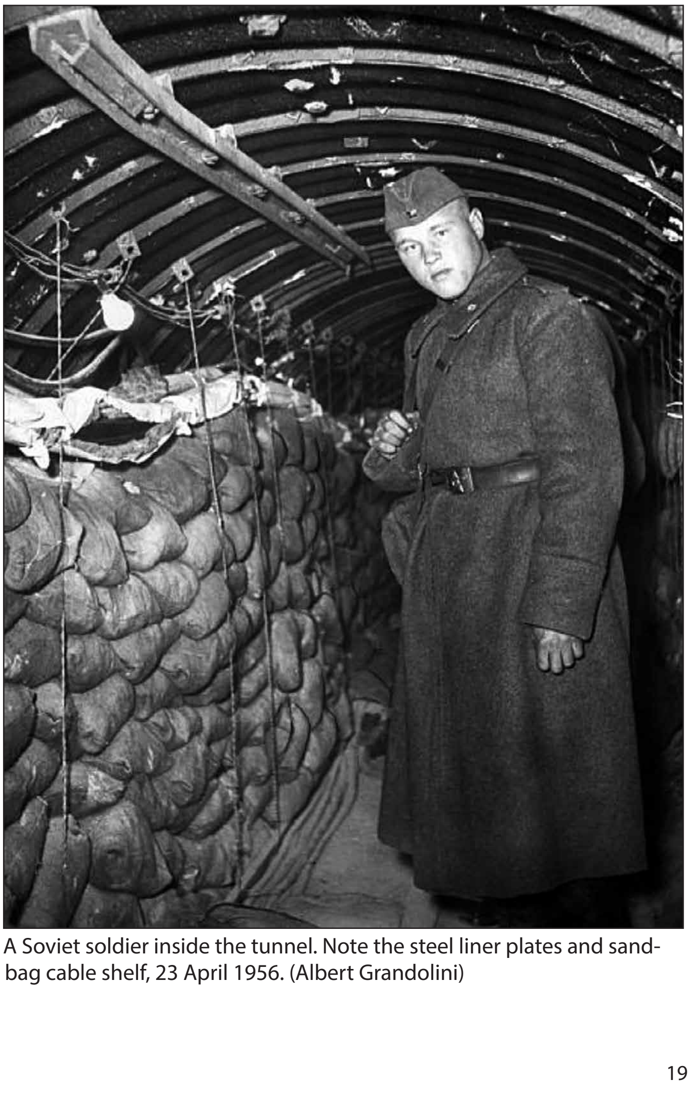
The successful tapping operation in May 1955 came at a critical point in East-West relations with a sudden flurry of activity. The Western Allies had officially ended their occupation of West Germany on 5 May, West Germany joined NATO on 9 May, the Warsaw Pact was formed on 14 May and the Austrian State Treaty was signed, giving Austria its independence on 15 May (effective 27 July). Therefore, it was a period of very high tension between East and West and a ready source of good quality intelligence was priceless.

The processing of Regal was on an industrial scale. The team of linguists at the Main Processing Unit in London swelled to around 320 people based at several addresses in Chester Terrace, opposite Regents Park. They were soon transcribing and translating over 1,300 telephone conversations a day.

The Washington-based Technical Processing Unit was just as industrial, and processed hours and hours of telegraph or teletype messages.



Soviet officers show journalists the tap location, 23 April 1956. (Albert Grandolini)



A Soviet soldier inside the tunnel. Note the steel liner plates and sand-bag cable shelf, 23 April 1956. (Albert Grandolini)

A Soviet signals officer examines the equipment inside the Amplification Chamber, 23 April 1956. (Albert Grandolini)

By now, George Blake had been posted to Berlin on general intelligence duties, and so was no longer privy to updates on Gold or Regal. That meant that KGB headquarters in Moscow (known as Moscow Centre) were also in the dark about the status of the tunnel or the intelligence that was leaking through it. Serov, however, still kept the tunnel a close secret.

Towards the end of 1955, he began work on a plan to 'discover' the tunnel, believing that enough time had passed to lower the risk of exposing Blake. A KGB communications expert was sent to Berlin with a vague brief to look for a possible breach and began a methodical search of all the circuits. After a while, they narrowed their search down to 30 miles of cables which ran close to the sector borders and surveyed the routes with heat-seeking equipment. For the moment, the tunnel's air-conditioning defeated their equipment, but the search moved onto the local telephone exchanges looking for discrepancies.

In the meantime, the Berlin KGB *Rezident* told the head of the GSFG that his phone lines had been compromised and in order to protect a source, the breach needed to be accidentally 'discovered' in a routine search by a Soviet Army signals team. He neglected to tell the general that the KGB had known about it all along. Despite the general knowing, the quantity and quality of calls being recorded did not decrease.

The very wet spring in 1956 was playing havoc with the Soviet's telecommunications in Berlin, with water seeping into the phone cables and shorting them out, however, it provided ideal cover for the ongoing search for the breach. The signals engineers tackled fault after fault, gradually getting closer to Altglienicke and the tunnel operation, while the CIA analysts listened in, powerless to do anything about it.

It so happens that Blake's January 1954 report to his KGB handler was remarkably accurate. The Soviets looked for the shortest distance between the cables and the sector border and when they surveyed it, they happened to find a heavily guarded US military installation right next to it. The hand drawn map that Blake gave his handler was spot on, and even included the Altglienicke cemetery, which was next to the tunnel. In the early hours of 22 April 1956, under cover of the fault-finding operation, a team of Soviet and East German signals and telephone engineers turned up on Schönefelder Chaussee at Altglienicke, opposite the warehouse, and began digging holes at 3-5ft (1-1.5m) intervals along the road right over the tap chamber. All of this was watched by a horrified observation team, who sounded the alarm, with phones ringing in Berlin, Frankfurt, London and Langley, mobilising the Operation Gold team into action, although there was little they could actually do. The microphones in the tap chamber were picking up the sounds of digging. The operation was about to be blown but they needed to know whether its discovery was accidental or whether they were acting on intelligence from a mole in the operation.

East Berlin Police officer examines the equipment inside the Amplification Chamber, 23 April 1956. (Albert Grandolini)

At 0200, the diggers hit concrete, but it did not unduly alarm them as it could easily have been some kind of wartime installation, a legitimate junction box or even part of a drainage system. Emergency protocols in the warehouse ordered everyone out of the tunnel in order to avoid an underground confrontation or even a firefight. The reinforced concrete roof took a while to get through, but when the engineers peered into the chamber, they assumed it was part of an old phone network or some kind of East German telephone repeater station. At 0250, an unidentified signals colonel (almost certainly a KGB officer in a signals uniform) turned up and ordered the digging to stop and cordoned off the hole as if it was a crime scene.

Across in the warehouse, all hell was breaking loose – a makeshift barrier was quickly erected at the underground sector border made from sandbags and barbed wire, and a handwritten sign was placed facing down the tunnel saying in Russian and German that this was the sector border and should not be crossed. The personnel at Rudow were seeing all their hard work evaporating in front of them from multiple angles: the sentries in the observation post could watch what was going on above ground, the microphones in the tap room could hear the conversations of the Soviet and East German engineers, and the analysts in the Ops Room could listen into the excited chatter on the signals unit's phone circuits.

By 0500, the mysterious colonel had returned along with senior Soviet signals officers and the KGB *Rezident*, who 'happened to be' in the vicinity. At 0630, the microphones picked up a German voice saying that the cable had been tapped.[17] The recording machines in the warehouse Ops Room kept recording telephone conversations until about 0800, when the Soviets managed to divert the voice circuits to other cables, but teletype traffic continued until 1530 that afternoon, when the taps were finally cut. By late morning on 22 April, the Soviet and East German engineers broke into the pristine Equipment Chamber full of the West's latest telecommunication technology, which they described as an underground 'telephone exchange'.[18] Operation Gold (or PBJOINTLY or Stopwatch) had come to an abrupt conclusion after 11 months and 11 days.

The British and American authorities went into 'damage limitation' mode, expecting the news to explode politically and potentially militarily. Bill Harvey, the pugnacious station chief at BOB, asked for permission to blow up the tunnel but was refused after the head of the US Berlin Brigade warned such an action could lead to World War Three. Official protests were made and rebuffed, but the real war of words took place in the media. The KGB put into operation an elaborate plan to make as much as possible of this 'grievous breach' in the international arena, inviting every accredited journalist in East and West Berlin to a press conference on the evening of the 23 April in Karlshorst. After the briefing, the journalists were bussed down to Altglienicke, where engineers had built a shed over the hole in the road and rigged up ladders, lighting and generators. It was clear that much of the equipment was American made, and this was highlighted in the tours given to the reporters. The KGB wanted the Americans to get all the blame for the intrusion, so little was made of the British involvement, which suited London just fine.

The East German press predictably went into overdrive condemning the Americans and their criminal operation with characteristic zeal, and a similar tone was repeated in other communist countries. The Western media, on the other hand, did not see the operation as criminal but celebrated America's ingenuity and audacity. The Soviet PR campaign may have backfired in the West, but it did the job in East Germany, whipping up anti-American fervour, with carefully orchestrated 'rent-a-mob' demonstrations 'spontaneously' taking place opposite the warehouse complex. In May 1956, the discovery site became an unlikely tourist attraction, and queues formed at Altglienicke to visit the famous tunnel. Steps had been installed, information panels prepared and buses full of tourists, schoolchildren, workers on factory outings and foreign dignitaries were bussed in and *Vopos* gave guided tours. The visitors could buy a souvenir guide, enjoy refreshments, and climb up onto the wooden observation platform that had been built to spy on the warehouse complex through binoculars. In the six months it was open, it attracted around 90,000 visitors. Over at the warehouse, all the recording and ancillary equipment was quietly dismantled and trucked away, and the personnel were all sworn to secrecy and dispersed back into their respective military, intelligence or civil service organisations. Rudow, however, continued to be an ELINT collection site right up until the early 1980s.

A comprehensive CIA and SIS enquiry at the time concluded that it was an accidental discovery while looking for faults brought on by the rain, and George Blake escaped without suspicion, free to continue spying for his Soviet masters.[19]

The volume of telephone and telegraph intercepts that came down the tunnel was staggering. The MPU in London fully transcribed 20,000 two-hour Soviet voice reels, which contained 368,000 conversations. In addition, they received 13,500 two-hour German reels of which 5,500 reels containing 75,000 conversations were processed and 17,000 were fully transcribed. Over in Washington, the TPU's numbers were just as impressive. 18,000 six-hour Soviet teletype reels and 11,000 six-hour German teletype reels were completely transcribed. Once the flow had stopped, the processing units were able to work through the huge backlog of intercepted messages that had accumulated and the work would continue until September 1958, producing 1,750 intelligence reports and with Regal-based intelligence still being used well into the 1960s. The operation had been able to listen in to Soviet and East Germany signals traffic during the Geneva Summit in July 1955 (the first Big Four meeting since Potsdam), the fall out after Khrushchev's 'Secret' Speech in February 1956, the formation of the East German Army (the *Nationale Volksarmee*, the *NVA*) in March 1956, and Khrushchev's less than successful visit to the UK in April 1956 (which included the infamous Buster Crabb incident), all pivotal moments in the early Cold War. The intelligence also gave the West invaluable insight into the generally poor relationship between Moscow and Berlin, the dysfunctional relationships in the Kremlin and between the KGB and GRU, the progress of the DDR's militarisation process and the inner workings of the Warsaw Pact.

The loss of Operation Gold was somewhat offset by the start of the CIA's U-2 surveillance programme, overflying the Soviet Union and her satellite states. The first operational flight took place on 20 June 1956 and from then on US foreign intelligence operations took on a very different approach.[20]

George Blake was arrested on 10 April 1961 and confessed to being a Soviet spy. During his interrogation he admitted betraying Operation Gold back in January 1954, which threw the validity of all the Regal material into doubt. Unaware of Ivan Serov's great gamble, they reviewed every piece of intelligence in this new light, but consistently concluded that it had to be genuine. It was not beyond the initiative and resources of the KGB to attempt an industrial scale *Dezinformatsiya* or disinformation programme, but the length of the operation, the sheer volume of material and high number of phone/telegraph users suggested otherwise. The 1968 CIA report stated '*… we have no evidence that the Soviets attempted to feed us deception material through this source*'.[21]

Operation Gold/PBJOINTLY/Stopwatch came at a very critical time, and its intelligence 'product', Regal, gave Western intelligence organisations invaluable background and context to some of the pivotal developments in the early Cold War.

4

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

By the mid-1950s, the East German economy was already in a downwards spiral, while their neighbours in West Germany were experiencing something close to an economic miracle under Adenauer's leadership. The Minister for Economics in Bonn, Ludwig Erhard, took a very liberal free-market approach to the new nation's economy; regulations were loosened, tariffs reduced, prices of raw materials lowered, and labour disputes vigorously avoided, and all this was boosted by American aid from the Marshall Plan. It led to spectacular growth and revitalisation – between 1950 and 1955, West German average incomes rose by 12 percent per annum, unemployment fell by two thirds and business boomed, fuelled by years of pent-up consumer demand. During this period, Khrushchev was actively courting Adenauer in order to try to persuade him to shift his allegiances more to the East – for a time, the Western

Refugees from Berlin's East Zone wait to be processed at the Marienfelde Refugee Camp in West Berlin in July 1961. (CIA)

Alliance was genuinely worried that this could happen. By the time the Allies officially ended their occupation and the Federal Republic of Germany became a sovereign state on 5 May 1955, the nation had become the most prosperous country in Europe.[1]

Because of its unique status, West Berlin lagged behind the rest of the FRG. Not only had it suffered extensive damage during the war, but its industry had also been comprehensively looted by Soviet forces before the other Allied Powers made it into the city. Furthermore, its island status generated extra logistical costs and complexities. The year-long blockade also set the Western sectors of the city back and the loss of the status of the nation's capital to Bonn meant that all the civil service and related jobs simply disappeared. However, by the mid-50s, West Berlin had caught up, the number of unemployed had fallen to an acceptable level and generous incentives were bringing investment into the city, so much so, that around 50,000 East Berliners made the trip over to the Western sectors each day to work (known as the border jumpers, the *Grenzgänger*).

A 3-year-old East German girl waits in the rain as her parents line up to register at a refugee centre in West Berlin in July 1961. (CIA)

East German Refugee Crisis

The East German economy under Ulbricht's Stalinist policies, however, was in terminal decline and despite some liberalisation after the events of 1953, it was showing little sign of recovering. It was also haemorrhaging experience and expertise to the West at an alarming rate – those leaving were key workers; entrepreneurs, small businessmen, scientists, doctors, dentists and skilled tradesmen – professional people who had been hit hard by state repression, the numerous official purges and in some cases, they were simply seduced by the brighter lights of West Berlin, in stark contrast with the monotone hues of East Berlin. Embarrassingly for the *SED*, some of those crossing were even Party members, unhappy with their life in the 'Workers' Paradise', they voted with their feet and decided to make the move West.

This mass exodus led to serious skill shortages in the East – between the formation of the DDR in 1949 and the crisis in 1961, around 2.8 million people had left the country out of a total population of around 17 million (approximately 1 in 6). Add those who left before the DDR was formed and the total goes up to around 4 million. By 1960, for example, the DDR was struggling with manpower for the harvest and winter planting, with the authorities admitting to a shortage of half-a-million workers in the Berlin area alone. Forty percent of the refugees reaching the West were of military age, leading to a serious shortfall in military manpower.

Table 2: *Republikflüchtlinge* (East German Refugees reaching West Germany)1949-1968[3]

Year	*Republikflüchtlinge*	Weekly Average	Comment
1949	129,245	2,485	Creation of the DDR
1950	197,887	3,804	
1951	165,648	3,186	
1952	182,393	3,508	Closing of Inner German Border *
1953	331,390	6,373	East German Uprising
1954	184,198	3,542	
1955	252,870	4,863	
1956	279,189	5,369	Soviet invasion of Hungary
1957	261,622	5,031	
1958	204,092	3,925	
1959	143,917	2,768	63% came via Berlin
1960	199,188	3,831	77% came via Berlin
1961	207,026	3,981	Building of the Berlin Wall
1962	21,365	411	
1963	42,622	820	
1964	41,866	805	
1965	29,552	568	
1966	24,131	464	
1967	19,573	376	
1968	16,036**	308	Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia

* Note how ineffective the closing of the IGB was in reducing *Republikflüchtlinge*.

** From 1968 to 1988, the average number of refugees reaching West Germany was 18,347 a year.

The numbers of the *Republikflüchtlinge*, literally 'those who flee the Republic', had grown steadily ever since the formation of the DDR in 1949, peaking in 1953, the year of the worker's uprising.

The closing and fortification of the IGB between West and East Germany in 1952 considerably cut down opportunities for escape, but such an elaborate construction project did not happen overnight, and until around 1960, gaps in the barrier could be exploited. The 111.9km (69.5 mile) outer ring around West Berlin, the so-called *Stadtgrenze* and another way out, had been partially closed off at the same time as the IGB, but the 43.1km (26.8 mile) inner city sector border, the *Sektorengrenze*, remained open, simply having the effect of re-directing potential escapees towards East Berlin, which became the 'escape hatch' from the DDR. Travel to the DDR's capital, and travel inside the country was not particularly restricted, then it was easy enough to slip over to the Western sectors; simply walk over an unguarded sector border or catch an S- or U-Bahn.

The numbers of refugees reaching Uelzen and Giessen were falling sharply, with just 100,000 people processed between summer 1952 and the end of 1953, but the new Refugee Reception Centre at Marienfelde in the American sector in the south of Berlin was swamped, processing almost 400,000 up to the end of 1953.

At the Marienfelde Reception Centre, refugees were given food, clothing, any medical treatment that was needed and were housed while their applications for permanent West German residency were processed. The centre grew to have 25 three-storey apartment blocks, and as they filled up, refugees were dispersed around the city to sleep in church naves, schools and hospitals. The centre administrators even had to request additional rations from the US garrison. Once their refuges status had been confirmed, they would be put on one of the daily charter flights to West Germany under the protection of the Western Allies to begin a new life in the West. Despite the cultural shock, most refugees settled in quickly, where the common language helped, and jobs were plentiful.

Every would-be refugee was carefully screened, but with so many passing through, the *HVA* (the East German Foreign Intelligence Service) was able to sneak in numerous agents into West Germany, where they were able to infiltrate all levels of politics, government and business. The most famous mole was Günter Guillaume, who came across in 1956 and rose through the ranks of the *SPD* to become a close aide to Willy Brandt, the ex-mayor of Berlin and German Chancellor. In April 1974, Guillaume was unmasked as an East German spy and sentenced to 13 years in prison. Brandt, who had been Chancellor since 1969, did not survive the scandal and resigned the following month, citing his own 'political negligence'.[2] Wolfgang Vogel, the East German lawyer who would feature numerous times in the story of the Cold War, arranged Guillaume's release in 1981 as part of a spy swap and Guillaume returned to East Germany as a hero.

The East German authorities called the refugees deserters and traitors and used the state-controlled media to appeal to the socialist sensibilities of their citizens to remain at home. They argued, quite correctly, that this mass migration was disrupting the East German economy, damaging the country's standing abroad and threatening its future. In Moscow, the Soviet leadership were under no illusions that the DDR's economy was in bad shape and were privately beginning to understand that the causes of this mass exodus were more than just economic. The Berlin question needed to be resolved.

Words, however, were not going to be enough to stem the flow of refugees.

5

AN ACCIDENT WAITING TO HAPPEN

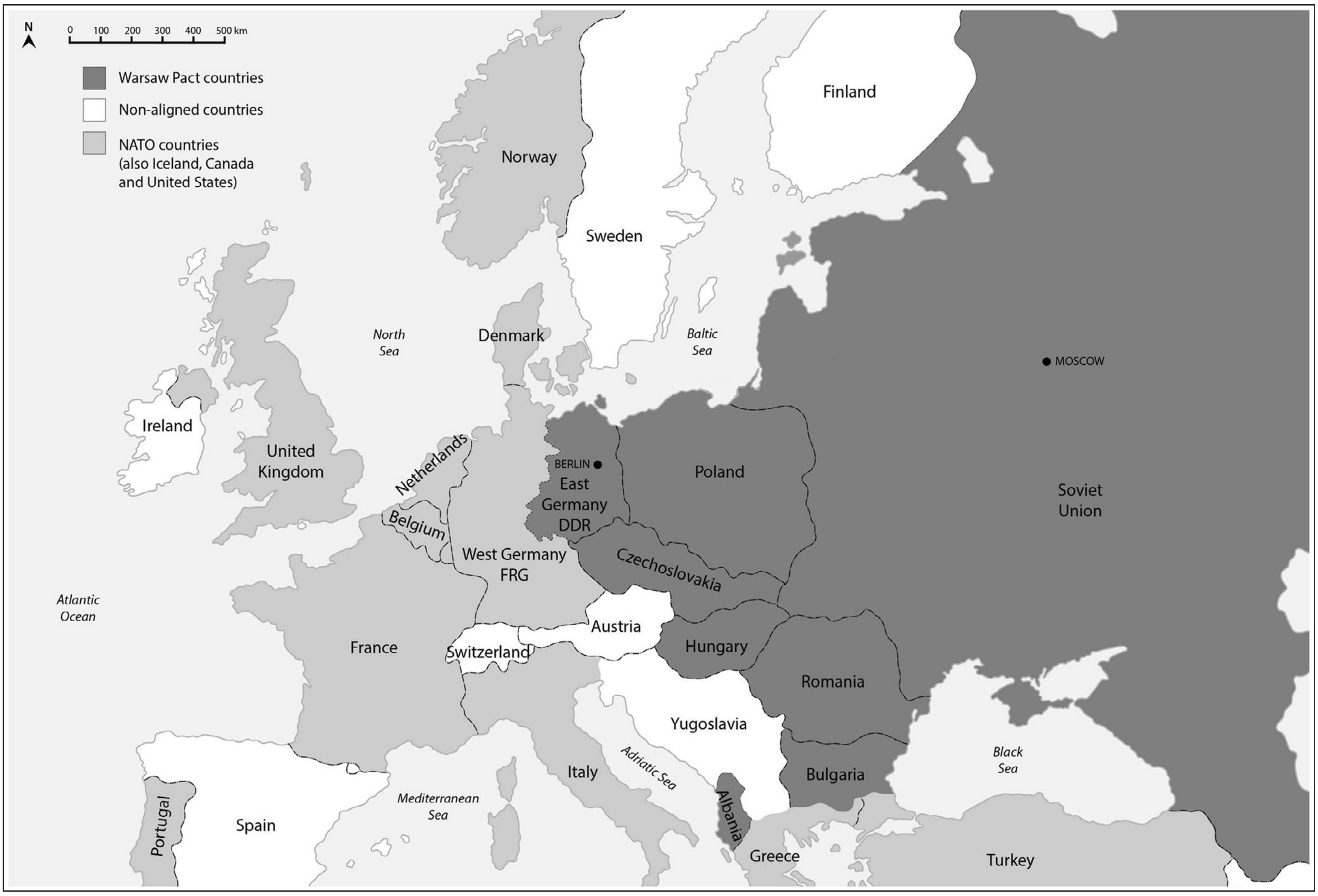
1953 brought some key changes that would impact on the global balance of power. Firstly, in January, Dwight D. Eisenhower succeeded Harry S. Truman as US President, bringing all his experience as a military leader with him, and in March, Stalin succumbed to a stroke, leading to a long power struggle within the Politburo that eventually left Nikita Khrushchev in charge. The Soviet Union had only ever known two leaders; Lenin and then Stalin, so Khrushchev had some very big boots to fill. His ascendance to power heralded a new and extremely dangerous chapter in the Cold War.

NATO vs. Warsaw Pact

On 6 May 1955, the day after West Germany had become a sovereign state and only 10 years after VE Day, the country was admitted into NATO, signalling their acceptance into the Western Alliance, and sending the Soviet Union a defiant message, while also ensuring that West Germany would be at the frontline of any shooting war with the Russians.[1] Allowing West Germany to re-militarise was a very sensitive subject, especially for the French, but the other members, the Americans in particular, saw West Germany's integration into Europe's defensive line as critical to the future stability of the continent. The Soviet Union reacted immediately with the establishment of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, more commonly known as the Warsaw Pact, on 14 May 1955. The original signatories to the Warsaw Treaty Organisation were the Soviet Union, Albania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and the German Democratic Republic. As with NATO, the members of the Warsaw Pact pledged to defend each other if one or more of them came under attack but further pledges not to interfere in each other's internal affairs and a collective approach to decision making were simply window dressing, as it was the Soviet Union who ultimately called all the shots.[2]

With the inclusion of West Germany, the jigsaw of NATO members now reached all the way from the Norway in the Arctic Circle to the eastern and southern borders of Turkey in the Middle East, facing off against the Iron Curtain of Warsaw Pact countries all the way from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.[3] The Cold War battle lines were drawn.

Over the next few years, Khrushchev steadily consolidated his power at home and abroad and by the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956 he felt confident enough to make his famous 'Secret Speech', denouncing Stalin and the doctrine of Stalinism.[4] Later in the year, Khrushchev faced his first real international challenge, when there was a popular uprising in Hungary; a Soviet satellite, a Warsaw Pact state and part of the Soviet's buffer zone, so carefully constructed by his predecessor. A new government was formed under the popular communist leader Imre Nagy, which pleased the people, but not Moscow, with Nagy refusing to toe the Party line. Nagy proposed


N
0 100 200 300 400 500 km
▇ Warsaw Pact countries
☐ Non-aligned countries
▒ NATO countries (also Iceland, Canada and United States)
Finland
Norway
Sweden
North Sea
Baltic Sea
Denmark
MOSCOW
Ireland
United Kingdom
Netherlands
BERLIN
East Germany DDR
Poland
Soviet Union
Belgium
West Germany FRG
Czechoslovakia
Atlantic Ocean
Austria
France
Switzerland
Hungary
Romania
Yugoslavia
Black Sea
Italy
Adriatic Sea
Bulgaria
Mediterranean Sea
Albania
Portugal
Spain
Greece
Turkey

NATO and the Warsaw Pact circa 1956. (Map by George Anderson) several reforms, which were against Moscow's policies, but his plan to leave the Warsaw Pact and declare neutrality in the Cold War was a step too far for Khrushchev. On 4 November 1956, he sent in Soviet tanks to show the Hungarians the error of their ways. The street fighting was brutal, with around 2,500 Hungarians and 700 Soviet soldiers killed, and approximately 26,000 Hungarians arrested, leading to further imprisonments and executions. After the Soviet intervention, around 200,000 Hungarians fled as refugees. Nagy was arrested and later executed, a new Moscow-friendly leader, János Kádár, was installed and Khrushchev's show of strength helped bolster his position with the hardliners at home. Fundamentally, though, apart from some diplomatic mutterings, the West did nothing to intervene. This emboldened the new Soviet leader, and it would have a knock-on effect in the years to come.

In June 1957, Khrushchev managed to survive an attempted coup by senior Politburo members, who were against Khrushchev's policies of liberalisation and denunciation of Stalin. Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich, all veteran Bolsheviks were identified as the coup leaders and were swiftly purged from power, finding themselves stripped of rank and privilege and exiled to distant corners of the Soviet Union.

That October, the Soviet Union stole a march on the United States with the successful launch of Sputnik, the world's first artificial satellite into earth orbit. While it itself did little more than 'beep' as it orbited the planet, it demonstrated that the Soviets had the means to launch a rocket into space, overfly the US mainland with impunity, spy down on what the Americans were doing, and, heaven forbid, drop an atom bomb right on their heads. The earth's atmosphere and the void beyond it had suddenly become a new 'front' in the Cold War – a crushing humiliation for American technology and a new existential risk for the Free World.

Khrushchev's Ultimatum

Buoyed up by his successes, Khrushchev decided it was time to bring Berlin back to the negotiating table and in a speech on 10 November 1958 at a Soviet/Polish Meeting in Moscow he delivered an ultimatum over the status of Berlin. Stating that the city's power-sharing agreement was obsolete, he gave the Allies six months to finalise a German peace treaty, to quit the occupation and turn West Berlin into a demilitarised 'free city'. If the Allies did not comply, he would unilaterally sign a treaty with the DDR and turn over all Berlin access rights to them. The unusual division of Germany into four occupation zones and the subsequent breakdown of relations between the Soviet Union and Great Britain, the USA and France – the other three occupation powers – meant that they never got around to signing the treaty to formally end hostilities between Germany and the former Allies. The formation of the DDR and FRG as sovereign states, the admittance of the FRG into NATO and the formation of the Warsaw Pact with the DDR as a member all went ahead with this non-treaty lurking in the wings.

It is interesting to mull on why Khrushchev was fixated on Berlin and the solution to the German Question. His personal involvement in the Great Patriotic War – as the Soviets described the Second World War – such as the siege of Stalingrad, may have given him an acute sensitivity to the possible resurgence of his former enemy and he was probably nervous about the re-militarisation and nuclearization of West Germany, particularly within the context of NATO forces stationed there. He had hoped to entice the FRG to look eastwards, rather than to the West and to the USA, although this became increasingly unlikely as West Germany's economy thrived. He was also concerned that the FRG would demand the return of the German territory that had been annexed during and after the Second World War, now forming parts of Poland and Czechoslovakia, members of the Communist Bloc, the Warsaw Pact and part of Stalin's Ring of Steel.[5]

By pushing for a negotiated peace treaty for all of Germany, he hoped to confirm the post-war Polish and Czechoslovakian borders once and for all, influence the re-arming of the *Bundeswehr*, stabilise his troublesome and vulnerable western flank, shore up the ailing East German economy and sort out their refugee problem. All of this, in his eyes, was necessary to normalise the German situation, and he wanted it resolved while he was still in the ascendant, acting unilaterally from the other powers if necessary. He was also suspicious that the West were playing the long game, biding their time and simply waiting for the DDR to fall apart on its own, allowing the Federal Republic to step in and re-unify Germany under capitalism.

The problem with this negotiated solution was that neither communist East Germany nor capitalist West Germany were ever going to give up their respective systems. It was inconceivable that Ulbricht would give up on the Stalinist system he had worked so hard to create. It was equally inconceivable that Adenauer would jeopardise his country's economic resurgence, and his NATO partners would reject a communist West Germany, for obvious reasons. The two systems were irreconcilable. The focus of Khrushchev's fixation, therefore, became the capitalist enclave of West Berlin, which so offended his sensibilities and caused him so many problems.

Khrushchev was also wary of his position at home and having fended off an attempted coup the previous year, and believing that international opinion was in his favour, he adopted this bullish foreign policy to silence his detractors within the Politburo and the wider communist family. Walter Ulbricht, the East German leader, obediently joined in with Khrushchev's offensive, stating that as Berlin was located within the Soviet zone, the West were allowed in the city only as a result of the Potsdam Agreement. In his view, by re-arming West Germany, the West had broken that treaty, and therefore had no right to be in Berlin.

Khrushchev, however, was fully aware that leaving Berlin's fate in the hands of the temperamental East German leader was bound to end in tears, and he would have to come to Ulbricht's aid in the inevitable crisis that would ensue, with the real possibility of plunging the East and West into war. Khrushchev's bluff over Berlin could easily have backfired, but after some secret back-channel diplomacy where his emissaries assured the Americans that they did not want to go to war over the city, Khrushchev backed down and, in May 1959, withdrew the time limit on the ultimatum. In a wonderful Kafkaesque twist, he subsequently denied giving the ultimatum in the first place and claimed the Americans had simply misunderstood him. Khrushchev and Eisenhower met face-to-face at Camp David on 25 September 1959 and while the summit did not result in any concrete decisions, but both leaders expressed a mutual respect and understanding plus recognition that general disarmament was the biggest issue facing the world in 1959. Eisenhower recognised that a successful resolution to the German Question was the key to more productive negotiations with his Soviet counterparts on other key subjects such as arms control. The unresolved peace treaty was a major stumbling block for the Soviets, as was America's support for the re-arming of Germany, which they felt was a step in the wrong direction. Khrushchev needed proof that his moves to de-escalate Cold War tensions were bearing fruit and he succeeded in getting Eisenhower to agree to a Four Power summit in Paris to discuss

Berlin and disarmament. He also confirmed that the ultimatum over Berlin was lifted and invited Eisenhower to visit the USSR.

Paris Summit and the U-2 Incident

There was a lot riding on the Paris Summit, which was due to start on 16 May 1960, but Khrushchev's carefully choreographed charm offensive all fell apart in the skies above Sverdlovsk in the Ural Mountains on 1 May 1960, just over two weeks before the meeting. Francis Gary Powers' Lockheed U-2 spy plane was shot down by a Soviet S-75 Dvina (NATO reporting name SA-2 'Guideline') surface-to-air missile, a weapon that the CIA believed their top-secret surveillance programme was safe from.[6] The Eisenhower administration's handling of the incident was clumsy and was exposed as a pack of lies when presented with irrefutable evidence, namely the actual wreckage of this highly classified aircraft and a captured pilot. On 11 May, Eisenhower gave a press conference admitting the U-2 was theirs, and that this mission and all others, were sanctioned by himself and were necessary to try to get a better understanding of Soviet intentions. This was short of the apology that Khrushchev was looking for and when Eisenhower refused to apologise in person at the summit, Khrushchev stormed out. Eisenhower's proposal for an open skies policy, where UN aircraft would be allowed overfly both countries to monitor nuclear activity, did not make it to the negotiating table. In a strange case of mutual denial, Khrushchev would not have been able to agree to independent overflights because he had exaggerated Soviet nuclear capabilities, while Eisenhower could not reveal that he was fully aware of Khrushchev's exaggerations without betraying his top-secret spying programmes. It was politically safer for the Soviet leader to take a hard-line and walk away from the summit than to be seen at home to offer concessions, and he was prepared to wait until Eisenhower was out of power and restart negotiations over Berlin with his successor.

Ever the opportunist, Ulbricht argued for aggressive action as revenge for the U-2 incident, proposing a full-blown invasion of West Berlin, with Soviet backing, of course. He also asked for additional funding to help reduce the DDR's dependence on their West German neighbours. Khrushchev managed to deflect the East German leader for the time being but knew he would have to make some major concessions to get him of his back. When John F. Kennedy won the US Presidential election in November 1960, Khrushchev saw a fresh opportunity to bring the Berlin issue to a head.

1961

1961 was set to be a very interesting year with hugely significant world events all tumbling together one after the other, all edging towards a potential confrontation between the superpowers. The leaders of the world's superpowers could not have been more different: Kennedy represented a new era for American politics; young and idealistic, representing the next generation and a bright future for the nation. Khrushchev was a wily old Bolshevik, who had cut his political teeth in revolution and the brutal purges of the 1930s. The young president had a lot to prove, with little experience on the world stage. The Soviet leader, on the other hand, was constantly looking over his shoulder to see who was plotting against him. Khrushchev had gone out on a limb by reducing Soviet troop numbers to demonstrate his good faith to the Americans, but some Politburo members saw this as a sign of weakness, a vulnerability that Mao Zedong from China, Enver Hoxha of Albania and Walter Ulbricht of East Germany, also sought to exploit.

Ulbricht was a constant irritation to Khrushchev, nagging the Soviet leader about the economic woes of the DDR and the status of Berlin. A truly Machiavellian individual, Ulbricht had worked hard to ingratiate himself with key Politburo members in Moscow (collectively known as the Ulbricht Lobby) and had even gone behind Khrushchev's back by sending a delegation to Beijing to build a consensus against the Soviet leader. Frustrated by the lack of action in response to his nagging over Berlin, Ulbricht unilaterally began tightening the access to West Berlin, including interfering with diplomatic movements, before being ordered to desist by Khrushchev. Replacing Ulbricht with someone who was more pliable was the obvious solution, but Ulbricht had some strong allies in the Kremlin and removing him would not be easy.

The communist family was not the only source of pressure for Khrushchev – the rest of the world was rising to the challenge. NATO was proving more resilient than expected and West German re-armament was developing further and faster than he had wanted, potentially changing the European balance of power. US defence spending was also on the rise, with a growing presence in Europe. The 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was due to take place in Moscow in October 1961, and it was distinctly possible that his enemies could choose it as a moment to pounce.

Back-Channel

During his transition period, a secret back-channel was established between the White House and the Kremlin, which would prove to be extremely useful. The contact was Georgi Bolshakov, supposedly a correspondent for the official Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* but actually an agent of the GRU, the Soviet Military Intelligence Service, and Kennedy asked his brother Robert, the US Attorney General, to secretly meet him and sound him out. This route was unconventional, bypassing the normal diplomatic channels, but seemed to be genuine and offered a degree of deniability for both parties.

Kennedy let it be known that he was interested in repairing some of the damage done to the US/Soviet relationship during Eisenhower's presidency and asked Khrushchev for patience. He indicated that he was interested in a nuclear test ban treaty, keen to reach a solution over Berlin and was looking forward to meeting the Soviet leader face to face. However, he made it clear that should Khrushchev challenge West Berlin while he was settling in, he would not hesitate to defend the West's position there. Khrushchev admitted he was worried about the US military build-up and was under intense pressure from within to sign a peace treaty with the DDR. Kennedy responded that he was open to further discussions but was keen to tie the neutrality of Laos in with the future of Berlin.

Khrushchev, Kennedy and Ulbricht

Despite these positive manoeuvrings in the background, Khrushchev began the year by delivering a belligerent speech before a group of Soviet theoreticians and propagandists at the Kremlin on 6 January 1961.[7] It was a blockbuster of a speech, reaffirming the Communist Party's core aims, setting out their agenda for the next few years, rallying the Party faithful (and critically the wider communist family), rattling the Soviet military's sabres, and firmly throwing down the gauntlet in public to the incoming US President.

Berlin would have a key role to play in Khrushchev's plans – his challenge over Berlin was designed to split the Western Alliance over the issue, which it very nearly did, and at the same time test the incoming US President. The West, of course, would be completely unaware of the psychological games Khrushchev was playing and would perceive the threat to be a military one, which is exactly what he wanted.

In his speech, Khrushchev reiterated his ultimatum to the West over Berlin, warning that the USSR was fully determined to sign a separate treaty with East Germany if the Western powers refused to recognise the "real situation" in Berlin and Germany. Berlin had once again become a pawn in a global super-power standoff.

Every word of the speech was carefully analysed by the CIA, the State Department, the US Senate and the White House, looking for both the obvious and the hidden messages, but whichever way they cut it, it spelt out communist aggression. As for Berlin, Khrushchev left the analysts guessing about his timing on his ultimatum – he seemed to have dropped the April deadline given to the American Ambassador to Moscow the previous autumn, but watchers expected some form of action before the October Party Congress. The speech marked a new level of confidence, belligerence and sophistication from the Kremlin, heralding a new period of heightened danger for US-Soviet relations.

Soon after Khrushchev's speech, Ulbricht sensed an opportunity and wrote to him demanding he act to resolve the Berlin situation. In his letter, he demanded that Khrushchev unilaterally end the Four Power occupation rights over the city, expel the Allied troops and hand their powers and control of the air corridors over to the DDR. He wanted the Soviets to force the Western radio stations to stop broadcasting to the DDR, thus further controlling the media available to his people. He openly blamed the Soviet Union for the perilous state of the DDR economy through excessive post-war reparations, wholesale post-war looting of his infrastructure and the blanket Soviet Bloc refusal to accept US Marshall Plan economic support. He therefore requested that the Soviet Union increase economic aid to the DDR and reduce reparations, so any Western punitive sanctions would be ineffective. Paradoxically, he also asked that the DDR could be seen to escape from the shadow of the USSR in the eyes of the world while demanding that the other members of the Warsaw Pact give him military and economic support. There is also a suggestion that Ulbricht proposed a full border closure for Berlin at the same time. He warned Khrushchev that it was all going to end in tears if something was not done soon.

It is notable that Ulbricht had the impudence to make such demands of the great Soviet leader, the conceitedness to expect his fellow communists should help him and the arrogance to think he could get away with it. Recognising the power of the 'Ulbricht Lobby', Khrushchev's reply to the DDR leader was unusually contrite, agreeing with most of the points, buying time and asking for patience while he figured out Kennedy's position on the Soviet Union. Ulbricht may have been temporarily placated, but he was not going to wait for much longer.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was sworn in as the 35th President of the United States on 20 January 1961, and in response to Khrushchev's 6 January speech, he used his inaugural address to tell the Kremlin that the West would not be intimidated:

> Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.
>
> Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.[8]

If Khrushchev's speech had thrown down the gauntlet, then it looked as if the young American president had just picked it up, on behalf of the Free World.

While responding to Khrushchev's threats and bluster, Kennedy made the first mistake of his presidency, taking the Soviet's comments at face value and listening to some of the hawks in his administration, viewing them as a personal challenge. As a result, he dismissed Khrushchev's quite genuine conciliatory gestures as disingenuous and interpreted them as a provocation. Kennedy felt he had to match Khrushchev's toughness or risk appearing weak on the international stage. Khrushchev took the failure to acknowledge his potentially costly conciliatory gestures as a personal slight, which did not bode well for their future relationship.

This misunderstanding was at the core of Kennedy's alarmist and doom laden first State of the Union Address on 30 January 1961, just 10 days after his inauguration. It heralded a major increase in military spending, and with West Berlin's precarious position clearly in mind, a focus on improving airlift capabilities to '*better assure the ability of our conventional forces to respond, with discrimination and speed, to any problem at any spot on the globe at any moment's notice*'.[9]

Kennedy and Khrushchev's first face to face meeting was scheduled for 4 June 1961 in Vienna, but during the month of April, the new president's confidence took several knocks. Firstly, the Soviets demonstrated their lead in the space race by getting the first human into space. On 12 April 1961, Soviet Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin in Vostok 1 became the first human in space, beating American Mercury astronaut Alan Shepard in his Freedom 7 capsule by just under a month.[10] Next, Khrushchev piled on the pressure in an interview by veteran American journalist Walter Lippmann. The interview was published in the *New York Herald Tribune* and summarised the Soviet leader's position on Berlin:

- That the West had to accept the reality of two separate German states and a peace treaty would confirm the status of the DDR, FRG and West Berlin. This 'option' had West Berlin as a 'free city' with access guaranteed and token Four Power representation but overseen by neutral UN troops.
- His second position was that the two German states would form some sort of confederation or reunification. If they reached a deal, which granted West Berlin the same status as above, then it would be written into the treaty. If not, all occupation rights would end, and foreign troops would have to leave.
- His final position, if first two failed – which was almost certainly going to be the case – was to go ahead anyway and sign a separate peace treaty with DDR giving Ulbricht full control over access routes just as per his ultimatum to Eisenhower in 1958. If the US tried to use force to gain access to the city, then he would use the Soviet Army to blockade West Berlin and it would probably end badly.[11]

The final humiliation occurred in the Caribbean, on the island of Cuba, just over 100 miles from the Florida coastline. On 17 April 1961, a force of around 1,500 Cuban exiles, who had been armed and covertly trained by the CIA, invaded the island with the plan of overthrowing Fidel Castro's communist government.[12] The invasion was an unmitigated disaster, with over a hundred of the fighters being killed and almost everyone else being captured.[13] It

President John F. Kennedy meets with Nikita Khrushchev at the Vienna summit on 4 June 1961, a meeting that was characterised by heated exchanges over Berlin. (CIA)

was also a disaster for the US President, especially one so early into his presidency and he felt he had been betrayed by his advisers and forced down an unwinnable and disastrous path. It made him look weak and indecisive in the eyes of his foes, and his allies.

On 25 May 1961, only 12 weeks after his first State of the Union Address, Kennedy delivered, in effect, a second, billed as a '*Special address to the Nation on Urgent National Needs*'.[14] He justified this because of the '*extraordinary times*' the USA was experiencing, and the '*extraordinary challenge*' they were facing. Kennedy needed to come out fighting, showing off all the statesmanship he could muster and showing the world, and the Soviets in particular, that he was worthy of holding the position as leader of the Free World. The Vienna Summit was only weeks away and Kennedy needed his opposite number to see that he was not going to be the push-over Khrushchev was expecting.

To counter Khrushchev's 'Wars of National Liberation' Kennedy announced $2.65 billion in non-military economic and technical aid and $1.885 billion for the 'Military Assistance Program' (MAP).[15] He also announced a re-orientation of the US military to better meet the kind of threat posed by the Berlin situation. This included increased focus on air-mobility, rapid deployment and special forces, demonstrating to the Soviets that he had options other than all-out nuclear war available to him. The small Allied garrison in the city would offer little opposition to the massed Warsaw Pact forces surrounding them, but a substantial Allied military build-up just across the border in West Germany and highly mobile reinforcements just a quick hop away, may have been sufficient to make Khrushchev think twice before attempting to take West Berlin by force. Kennedy's speech made it clear that Berlin was very much on his radar, and he was putting the pieces in play to defend the city in advance of the forthcoming summit meeting. Privately, however, he was seeing cracks beginning to form in the tri-partite coalition that protected West Berlin. While Macmillan was broadly in agreement with the US position, De Gaulle was adamant that Kennedy should make no concessions and feared a 'domino effect' in Europe if there were compromises made over West Berlin.

Vienna

The new US President's first encounter with his Soviet opposite number proved to be a brutal experience. Khrushchev had been building up a long list of grievances against the Americans and sensed the opportunity to win some points in Vienna. Despite the back-channel reassurances, he took exception to the personal digs contained in Kennedy's State of the Union and May addresses, the unprecedented increases in defence spending and the challenges to the Soviet Union's position in the developing world.

Khrushchev was fixated on a solution to the German Question (in other words, Berlin) but was frustrated by Kennedy preferring to talk about Laos and a proposal for a nuclear test ban treaty. Khrushchev immediately went on the offensive, criticising the growth of West German militaristic '*sabre rattling*', and telling Kennedy that Berlin had become the most dangerous place in the world, an escape route for refugees and a base for Western espionage and propaganda.

As per his position in Lippmann's April interview, Khrushchev demanded the immediate signing of a peace treaty with the two German states. From his perspective, such a treaty (or treaties if a separate one was adopted for each state) would '*normalise*' the status of the city of Berlin, reduce international tensions and bring an enduring peace to Europe.[16] And if that did not happen, he would reactivate his 1958 pledge to go ahead and sign a unilateral peace treaty with East Germany, meaning the end of the Four Power occupation of Berlin. He reinstated the six-month deadline he had unsuccessfully tried with Eisenhower and even went as far as handing Kennedy a lengthy 'aide memoire' detailing the Soviet position. And to add weight to his argument, he repeatedly threatened war if the Americans challenged his plans.

Kennedy was instantly put on the defensive, although he seemed willing to accept the status quo in Europe (Poland and Czechoslovakia under communist control, Germany split, Berlin split) if it meant that the Kremlin stopped trying to expand elsewhere. This tacit acknowledgement was not lost on Khrushchev. Kennedy did not take the opportunity to challenge Khrushchev on his handling of the 1956 Hungarian uprising and failed to push the Soviet leader on the real reasons behind the East German exodus. He did say, however, that to abandon Berlin would be to abandon Europe, and that was not an option for the United States.

The meeting concluded with a bellicose Khrushchev saying that his '*decision to sign a peace treaty is firm and irrevocable*' and that if the US mobilised its forces to counter his actions, '*force would be met with force*'. Kennedy replied with the now famous words that '*it would be a cold winter*' ahead of them. While the Summit was going on, the armies of the DDR and USSR ran 3 days and nights of joint military exercises, making no attempts to hide what they were doing from Western observers. They were demonstrating their military readiness should the West consider any military response to what they were planning over Berlin.

Straight after the summit, he flew to London to meet with Macmillan and his foreign secretary, Lord Home, where they pledged their continuing support to the United States and agreed to update their military and contingency planning to cover what the West should do if Khrushchev followed through with his threats. In particular, they agreed to explore what would happen if civilian traffic was interrupted again and/or military supplies were interfered with.

KENNEDY:
BZ Seid bereit, für West-Berlin zu kämpfen!
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BZ Seid bereit, für West-Berlin zu kämpfen!
DER TAG

July 1961. Refugees from East Germany at the Marienfelde Reception Centre read news accounts of President John F. Kennedy's 25 July 1961 address to the American people about the growing conflict with the Soviet Union over the status of Berlin – '*Seid bereit, für West Berlin zu kämpfen*', '*Be ready to fight for West Berlin*'. (CIA)

Kennedy told the American press that the Vienna meeting was '*very sober*' but '*very useful*', however, the '*most sober*' discussions concerned Berlin and Germany. A week or so after the summit, Khrushchev repeated the demands in a radio broadcast, including the threat of thermonuclear war if the Oder-Neisse line between Germany and Poland was challenged, thus ensuring the world's media was aware of his ultimatum, believing that international opinion would go his way. Observers figured that Khrushchev would act on Berlin either before or soon after October's Communist Party Congress.

Berlin

Ulbricht, as usual, was quick to jump on the bandwagon, and called a press conference on 15 June 1961 in East Berlin, which included a number of Western journalists. Ulbricht droned on, bragging about what he would be able to do once the peace treaty with the Soviets had been signed. He wanted the Allies out of the city, which would stop the '*people trafficking*' and remove the '*espionage centres*'. The West would have to re-negotiate their access to West Berlin or face '*interruptions*'. Travel for East German citizens would become more highly regulated, and they would only be able to leave the country with permission from the Interior Ministry.

In a surreal piece of real-life theatre, Ulbricht, in an answer to a journalist's question about the state border at the Brandenburg Gate, famously volunteered that '*Niemand hat die Absicht, eine Mauer zu errichten*' – '*Nobody intends to put up a Wall*', when no one had previously mentioned *anything* about a Wall. The significance of this was missed by almost everybody in the room.[17]

The following day brought the biggest one-day exodus of East German refugees, numbering 4,770, which equates to an annualised total of 1,740,000, out of a population of just 17 million. This rush was a classic example of *Torschlusspanik* – the unique German word for 'fear of the door closing before you can pass through it'.[18]

By early July, Khrushchev was feeling the pressure over the status of Berlin from Ulbricht and from within the Politburo. Ulbricht was feeling that despite his nagging, Khrushchev was going soft on the cherished German peace treaty and sought to get his attention by introducing a crackdown on dissidents as well as launching a propaganda campaign to attempt to woo some of the *Republikflüchtlinge back* to the DDR by promoting the positive aspects of socialism over capitalism and dangling various incentives at them.[19] Given the upheaval and potential risks the escapees had faced in leaving the country in the first place, this campaign smacked of desperation and wishful thinking on Ulbricht's part.

Ulbricht could not have known, but Khrushchev was leaning more to Ulbricht's proposals for a physical barrier to stem the flow of refugees through Berlin, and he saw this as a higher priority (and much less trouble) than the German peace treaty. On 6 July 1961, Ulbricht was informed that the Kremlin had approved in principle his proposals to seal off the sector borders in Berlin and that he should proceed with detailed planning for their implementation, although the East Germans had already been working on the plans for some months. The various arms of the DDR's paramilitary forces had, in fact, secretly been planning for a confrontation with the West over Berlin, with troops trained in urban warfare and plans for prison camps prepared to deal with civic unrest.

When Ulbricht learnt of Khrushchev's change of heart, he apparently beamed with pleasure, telling him '*This is the solution! This will help. I am for this*'. Erich Honecker was given control of making it happen, all under a cloak of secrecy for maximum surprise.[20] The operation was disguised to look like a large but normal police operation, under the codename Operation Rose. In preparation, security was strengthened along the main borders between West and East Germany and around Berlin itself.

Over the coming weeks, the two superpowers escalated their rhetoric both privately via diplomatic notes and publicly in the media. On 17 July, the Western Allies informed the Soviet Union that the proposals in Khrushchev's aide memoire were unacceptable and would *not* be used as the basis for any negotiations over Berlin. A few weeks later, Khrushchev came back saying the Western Allies were '*playing the old record*'. Tensions were building on both sides of the argument.

Honecker's plans were completed on 25 July 1961 and included roles for the East Germans and the Soviets, as well as detailing contingencies for a civil uprising and/or an external military threat. Several days later, a map was completed detailing where the Wall would fall, carefully following the borders between city boroughs and the main zones of occupation. The actual sealing of the border would be done by the East German Border Police, and the Soviets would intervene only if the police could not get the job done. To that end, Soviet units based in East Germany were quietly reinforced throughout the summer. The East German government also advised its citizens against travelling to West Germany and West Berlin.

By the end of July, enormous quantities of building materials began to arrive in the city under conditions of strict secrecy. They came from all over Europe, ordered via third party cut-out companies and were delivered covertly to various police and army barracks. The deliveries included:

18,200 concrete posts, 150 tons of barbed wire, 5 tons of binding wire, 2 tons of staples, 300 tons of barbed wire (including some sourced from British and West German firms) and thousands of pairs of protective gloves.

On the evening of 25 July 1961, the same day as the plans were approved, Kennedy addressed the American people on the developing Berlin crisis. In this now famous speech, he made it very clear that the United States would never allow the Soviet Union to drive the Allied Powers out of Berlin. Citing the NATO pledge, he stressed that '*an attack upon that city will be regarded as an attack upon us all*', describing West Berlin as '*an island of freedom in a Communist sea*' and '*a beacon of hope behind the Iron Curtain*'. Announcing a major increase in defence spending he reiterated that '*Our primary purpose is neither propaganda nor provocation--but preparation*'.[21] Kennedy had played his card – at last Khrushchev knew what he was facing.

Back in Berlin, the situation continued to deteriorate, with increased harassment of Western troop movements – vehicles were stopped at checkpoints for lengthy unauthorised inspections, military aircraft were buzzed by Soviet aircraft and river traffic was interrupted. Allied units stationed in the city began an intensive programme of training including urban combat and riot control. The Allied commanders were happy for the East Germans and Soviets to witness the manoeuvres as it demonstrated that the Allies were up for as fight if it came to it. The British announced a recall of reservists to bolster the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) and leave and pass regulations were tightened at all US Army bases in West Germany, France and Italy, effective 1 August. The US also began deploying the nuclear capable F-105D Thunderchief fighter/bomber to Bitburg Air Force Base in West Germany.

At the start of August, Ulbricht's plan came together. On the 3rd, there was to be a Warsaw Pact leaders' summit meeting in Moscow, which was critical to the operation, but first he had to get Khrushchev's blessing. They met in private on 1 August and Khrushchev reviewed the plans for the 'iron ring' around Berlin, poring over the smallest of details, deciding who would do what and when.[22] Khrushchev wanted the operation to happen in the next 14 days and they had agreed that it should happen on a Sunday, when Berlin would be quiet. As the summit was due to go on until Saturday the 5th, Ulbricht would be travelling back from Moscow on Sunday 6th, so Sunday 13 August 1961 would be the first opportunity for the plan to go ahead.

The public justification was to be the general threat of war from the West, the need to keep spies out of the country, to make the economy safe from Western interference and to stop the Western human trafficking or 'headhunting' (*Kopfjagd*) – they felt the East Germans would understand that. Privately, it was hoped it would solve the refugee crisis and hopefully force the West into a peace treaty for Germany, thus resolving Berlin's unusual status, once and for all. Ulbricht was concerned that the closure could prompt a Western economic blockade of East Germany, which would be catastrophic for the economy. If that happened, Ulbricht was expecting the various Soviet Bloc states to bail the DDR out and wanted to use the summit meeting to get them to agree.

Khrushchev knew that he had to give the go ahead for the closure, but he was entering dangerous waters. Ulbricht was told in no uncertain terms that there were strict conditions for the Soviet leader's approval. Khrushchev would put off the signing of the unilateral peace treaty with the DDR until *after* the closure.[22]3Furthermore he insisted that Ulbricht left the road and air corridors to West Berlin alone, that the Wall operations should not extend a millimetre into the Western sectors and that the DDR must give the Western powers no grounds for retaliation.

Khrushchev had dodged the contentious peace treaty issue but was keeping Ulbricht on a very tight leash – anything that involved West Berlin, or the other occupying powers, required approval *in advance* from Moscow. However, given the clues in Kennedy's speeches, lengthy discussions with US Ambassador Thompson and covert reassurances via the back-channel, he felt that Operation Rose would be accepted as long as the Allied rights of access were not interrupted. Ulbricht got his green light.

While Khrushchev did not like the principle of the Wall, it got Ulbricht and the Politburo vultures off his back, and it would hopefully bring a bit of stability to problematic East Germany. He desperately needed to keep the DDR as a buffer between NATO in the West and the fellow satellite states of Poland and Czechoslovakia, in order to protect the Soviet Union's long borders. At the summit meeting, which took place between 3 and 5 August, the main item on the agenda was the fate of the DDR. The Warsaw Pact leaders were told of Ulbricht's plans to close the border and were pointedly reminded of their obligations to the Warsaw Treaty. Whether they liked it or not, the other Warsaw Pact countries (who all had their own economic challenges) were expected to provide economic support to the DDR, help plug the holes in the East German labour force by lending key workers and if it came to it, they were expected to fight. Khrushchev's wholehearted public backing of Ulbricht's plans helped defend his position in the Politburo, especially as the schism with communist China was beginning to show.

Khrushchev, however, did not relent in his public blustering; aggressively threatening in speeches on 7 August and again on the 11 August to go it alone with a German peace treaty and threatening a nuclear response if the Americans provoked him, despite privately recognising that a separate treaty was unlikely. NATO responded on 8 August 1961 and confirmed the Alliance's guarantee for Berlin's freedom.

On 11 August, the *Volkskammer* wrote Ulbricht a blank cheque to do whatever he needed to do to tackle the 'revanchist' policies of the West.[24] It was a complete sham, but gave Ulbricht's plans a veneer of legality and respectability. And while all this scheming, planning and stockpiling was going on, the citizens of East Germany continued to vote with their feet. Over the first 6 months of 1961, around 4,000 people a week were arriving at the Marienfelde Reception Centre in the south of the American sector of West Berlin. It was about to get very busy there – the first week in July saw the usual 4,000 people arrive, looking to begin a new life in the West. The second week, the number doubled to 8,000, 9,000 in the third week, and back to 8,000 in the fourth week. As August began, the numbers kept growing, with around 1,500 a day slipping through the net. They hit a record number on Saturday 12 August, so much so, that the Mayor of Berlin had to ask the American garrison for extra rations to feed the thousands of people arriving at the centre. The centre was already full, so the refugees were being billeted in nearby churches and with families while they were processed. And then, everything changed…

Table 3: Refugees arriving at Marienfelde[25]

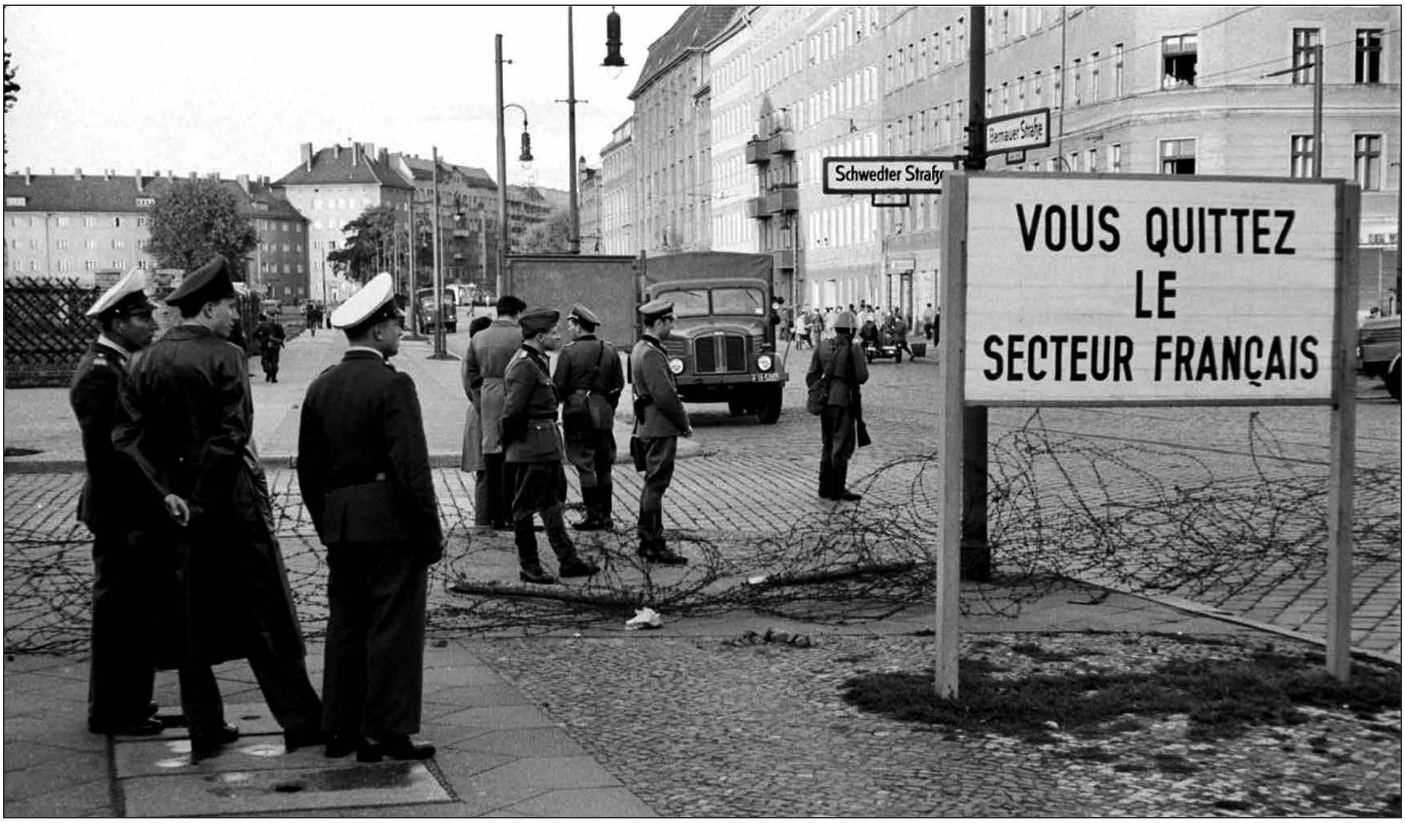
Day	Date	Refugees
Tuesday	8 August 1961	1,741
Wednesday	9 August 1961	1,926
Thursday	10 August 1961	1,709
Friday	11 August 1961	1,532
Saturday	12 August 1961	2,662
Sunday	13 August 1961	150
Monday	14 August 1961	41

6

OPERATION ROSE

The operation to close the sector borders between East and West Berlin was conducted with typical German efficiency. Rumours began to spread on both sides of the East/West border that something was about to happen but no one, apart from those sworn to secrecy, knew exactly what. The first to react were West Berlin's taxi drivers and word went around not to accept fares to the East. Western journalists also got wind that something was about to go down but had no specifics. The combined Allied forces in the city, however, remained in the dark.

On the afternoon of Saturday 12 August, the *SED* leadership and key 'opposition' party leaders were all attending a garden party at a government guest house just outside the city. The Party elite were deliberately isolated from the general population and media and were also contained so that Ulbricht could corral them into giving the necessary approvals for the operation. It would have also hopefully thrown any Western intelligence gatherers off the scent. Honecker, the architect of the Wall, was summoned to the meeting and Ulbricht signed the final order to proceed at 1600, with



Barbed wire blocking the corner of Schwedter Straße and Bernauer Straße in the French sector as West Berlin Police watch their East Berlin colleagues. Schwedter Straße would later disappear under the Death Strip. (Albert Grandolini)

A pair of *Vopos* or *Grenztruppen* guarding a section of newly laid barbed wire. They were under orders to avoid being photographed so whenever a camera appeared, they turned away. The trooper on the left is carrying a PPSh-41/MPi41 submachine gun, with an extra 71 round drum of ammunition in a pouch on his belt. The other soldier has a Karabiner-S (the East German designation for the Soviet SKS) semi-automatic carbine over his shoulder. The bayonet was permanently fixed to the rifle and folded back along the barrel when not in use. (US National Archives)

Workers pull up train tracks along the border to West Berlin at Wornholmer Straße in the Berlin district of Reinickendorf, watched over by *Trapos*. 28 September 1961. (US National Archives)

Honecker returning to Police Headquarters just off Alexanderplatz soon after. At 2200, Ulbricht briefed the wider *SED* leadership and asked for their unanimous agreement to proceed, which they duly granted. They were sequestered at the villa until the early hours of the morning, by which time everything was already in motion.

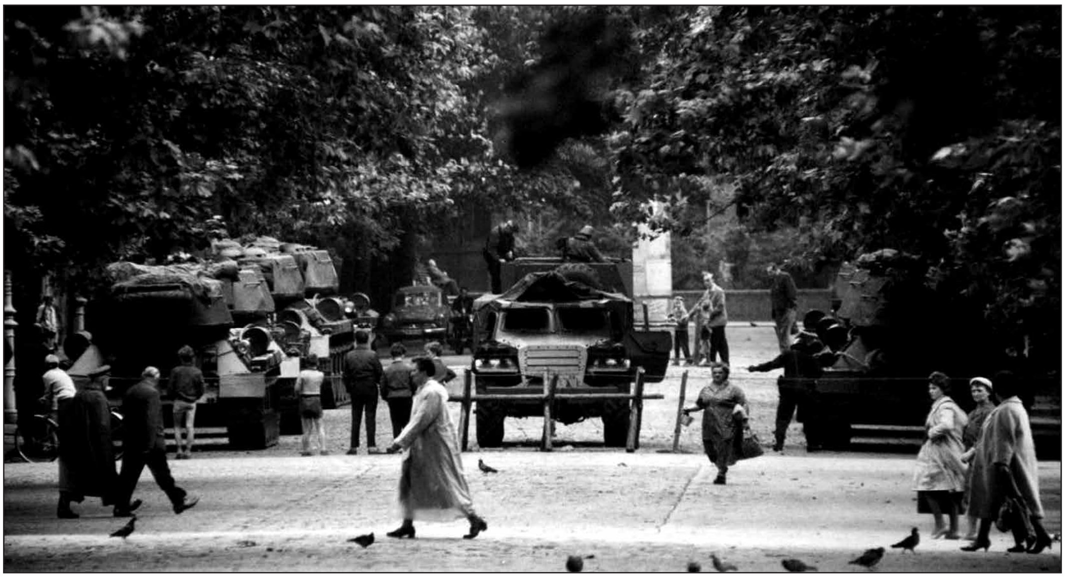
Army orders were issued at 2000 and cascaded down the chain of command. By 2200, everything was ready. At midnight, Honecker mobilised his forces consisting of 8,200 *Volkspolizei*, 3,700 mobile Riot and Public Order Police (the 'Readiness Police' – *Volkspolizei-Bereitschaften*, *VPB*), around 30,000 *KdA* troops, and 4,500 *Stasi* agents.[1] Additional back-up forces comprised 3,150 troops, 100 tanks and 120 armoured personnel carriers of the 8th Motorised Rifle Division based at Schwerin. There were also 4,200 troops, a further 140 tanks and 200 APCs of the 1st Motorised Rifle Division based at Potsdam. 10,000 regular East German troops were stationed in and around Berlin and a further 40,000 East German troops around the country who could be deployed if necessary. The whole East German People's Army had been on heightened alert from mid-July.

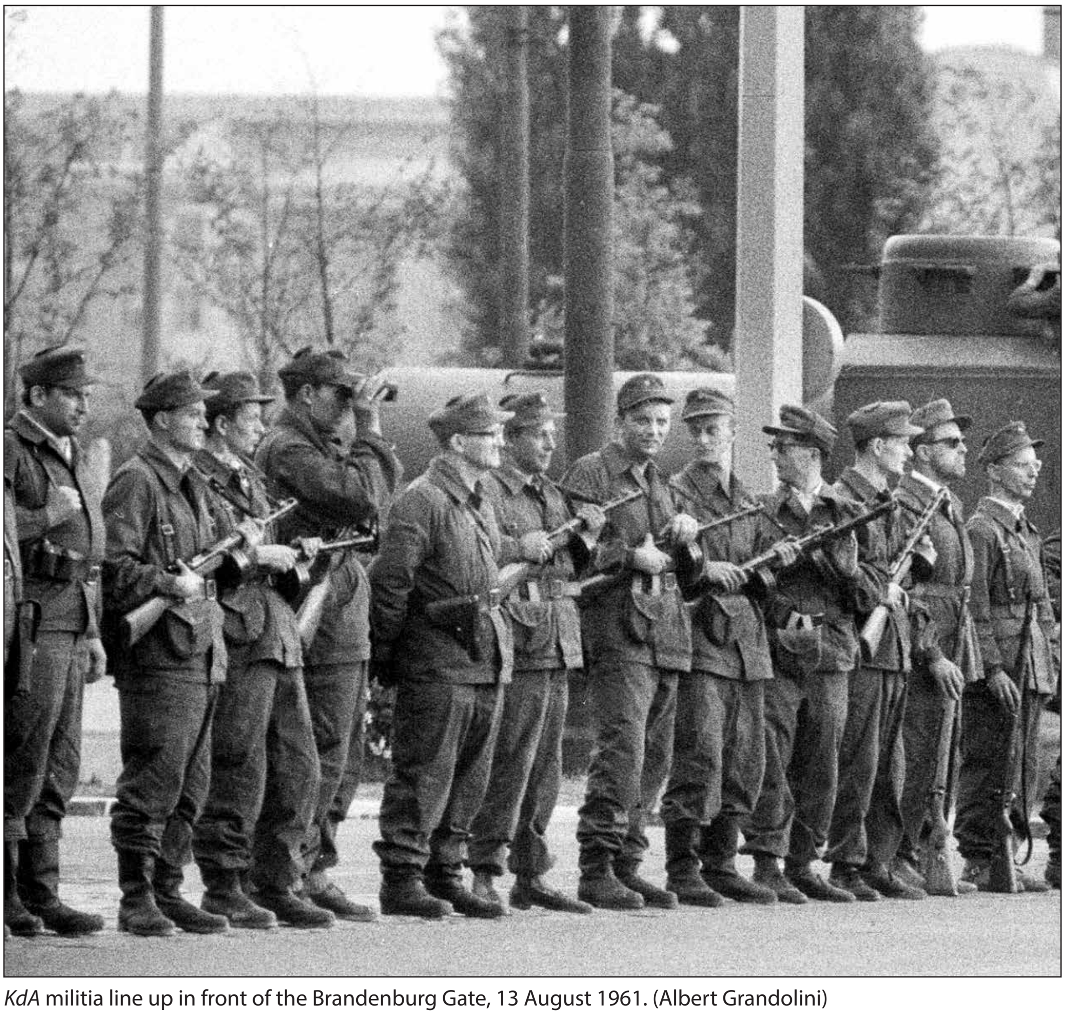
Elements from three Soviet divisions (including tanks, and APCs) positioned themselves at intervals around the Berliner Ring autobahn (as observed by a US MLM member): 19th Motorised Rifle Division, 10th Guards Tank Division and possibly the 6th Motorised Rifle Division, plus elements of the East German 1st Motorised Rifle Division – the Soviets wanted no repeats of what happened in Hungary in 1956.[2] Their manoeuvres were deliberately very obvious and transparent so to avoid any misunderstandings that could escalate into war, but it soon became obvious to observers that they were playing a secondary role, to be deployed only if the East Germans faltered, or if there was any organised Western military resistance to the border closure. Khrushchev had added to the stress levels by sending big hitter and war hero Marshall Ivan Konev to head up all Soviet forces in East Germany and supervise the closure. Konev had led the successful Soviet crackdown in Budapest in 1956 and the veiled threat of his posting sent a message to the world that the Soviet Union would not tolerate any public dissension or foreign intervention. To make matters worse, Khrushchev had also put his missile forces throughout Europe on high alert.

X-hour, the start of the operation and the point from which the rest of the timing cascaded, was kept secret until the last minute. The orders stated that it was all to begin at 0100 on the morning of Sunday 13 August 1961, the time when Berlin would change for ever.

At precisely 0105 on the morning of Sunday 13 August 1961, all the streetlights along the proposed route were switched off allowing thousands of armed sentries to form a human chain along the whole Soviet sector border under cover of darkness. The *SED* wanted the operation to appear to be a civilian operation, so the East German Army, the *NVA* were generally kept on the periphery of the action. The human chain of sentries was therefore mostly made up of *KdA* militiamen, supplemented with *Vopos*, *Grepos* and *Trapos* at key locations. Detailed plans dictated how many men were needed per metre, the density varying depending on how busy, strategic or high-profile a particular length of border was, for example, established crossing points such as Checkpoint Charlie and the Brandenburg Gate or contentious locations like Bernauer Straße. At 0111, a communique from Moscow on behalf of the Warsaw Pact chattered through on the teleprinters of the main news organisations in the city. It stated that '*the Warsaw Pact proposes reliable safeguards and effective control be established around the whole territory of Berlin*', in other words: we endorse what the East Germans are doing and intervene at your peril. The communique was also picked up by the Allied military and relayed up the chain of command.

One of the biggest issues for the planners was the mobilisation of the forces needed to complete the operation, given the blanket of security around it. Barracks based police, border guards and soldiers were easy to deploy once the orders were issued, and individual


East German T-34/85 tanks and a BTR-152 APC parked up in East Berlin in reserve on 13 August 1961. (Albert Grandolini)

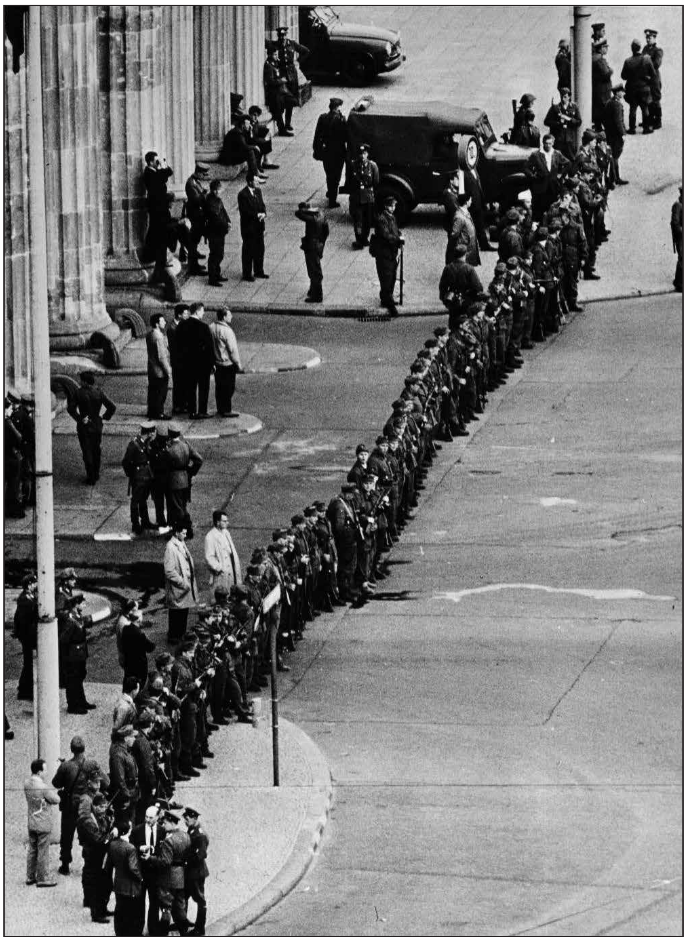

KdA militia line up in front of the Brandenburg Gate, 13 August 1961. (Albert Grandolini)

police stations called in their own people, but it was quite a challenge to alert the 25-30,000 *KdA* militiamen, asleep in their beds on a Saturday night all over East Berlin. The senior *KdA* officers were notified at 0130 – soon after a general alert went out – cascading primarily by word of mouth as private telephones were still quite rare at the time. Policemen and block wardens were used to knock on doors to wake up the thousands of militiamen needed, and within an hour or two, there was a sizeable force available. They were quickly deployed in units of 100, split into three platoons, each with three squads and were under police control.

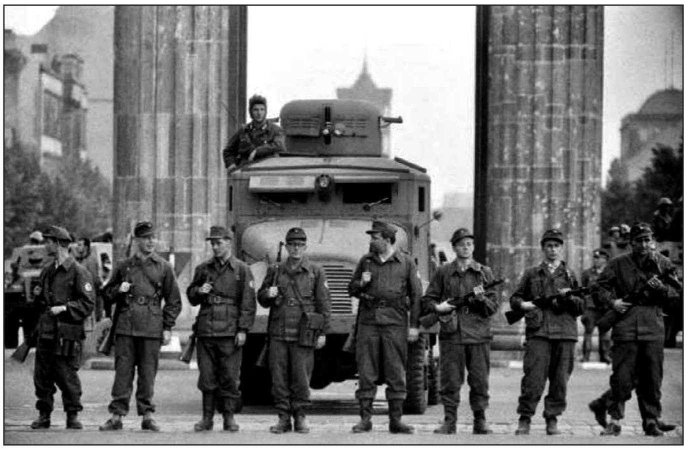
Although notionally a civilian volunteer force, the *KdA* were armed and trained in infantry tactics, effectively a reserve paramilitary organisation. They were armed mostly with Soviet Second World War vintage PPSh-41 submachine guns – designated MPi41 in East German service – fitted with a 71 round drum magazine, an old, but effective weapon, especially in an urban environment. Others were armed with former *Wehrmacht* KAR-98 rifles. Ammunition was issued out in proportion to the perceived risk of violence and the Rules of Engagement were strictly dictated. The professional *NVA*, *Vopos* and *Grepos* had live ammunition from the outset, but the *KdA* militia volunteers stood guard with empty weapons, their ammunition staying in their packs until otherwise ordered. Their orders were simple – not allow anybody to proceed from East to West, not to react to provocation from the West and not to open fire with live ammunition (some even carried blanks) – it was imperative that there should be no provocation of West Berlin Police or Allied forces.

When in position, some of the troops formed the human chain around West Berlin, while others began unloading reels of concertina wire from trucks, which they proceeded to string out along the border, creating the first actual barrier and cutting off all the main crossing points.

Erich Honecker, the operation's chief architect, spent the night alternating between Police Headquarters on Alexanderplatz and inspecting construction work along the border. In the meantime, the mainline, S-Bahn and U-Bahn trains were stopped at the border and forced to go back to their depots. Transport Police (*Transportpolizei* or *Trapos*) took over the U-Bahn and S-Bahn stations on or near the border to stop all movement in and out of East Berlin and engineers even went as far as lifting the tracks at the sector borders so nothing could pass.

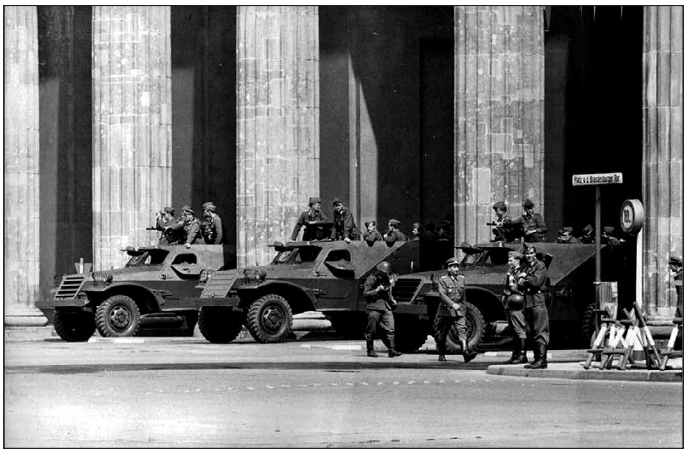


East German *KdA* Militia line up in close ranks to seal off Berlin's key border crossing point, the Brandenburg Gate, 13 August 1961. (US National Archives)

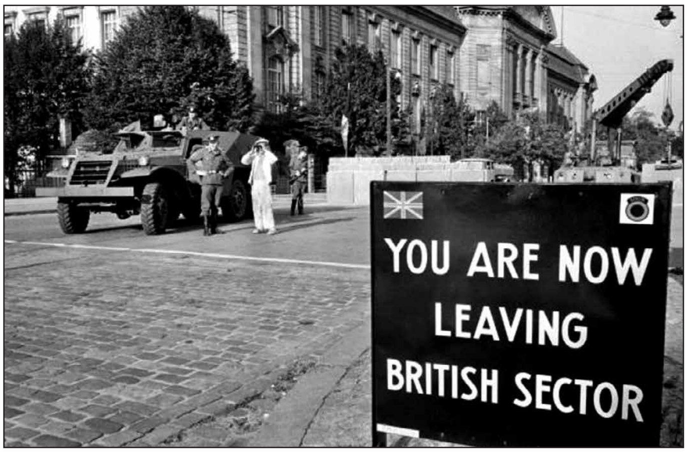


KdA militia line up in front of the Brandenburg Gate. Behind them is a *Wasserwerfer SK II* water cannon, 13 August 1961. (Albert Grandolini)

A *KdA* officer directing a civilian. Behind them is a *Wasserwerfer SK II* water cannon, 13 August 1961. (Albert Grandolini)



BTR-152 armoured personnel carriers of the East German *Grenztruppen* at the Brandenburg Gate, 13 August 1961. (Albert Grandolini)

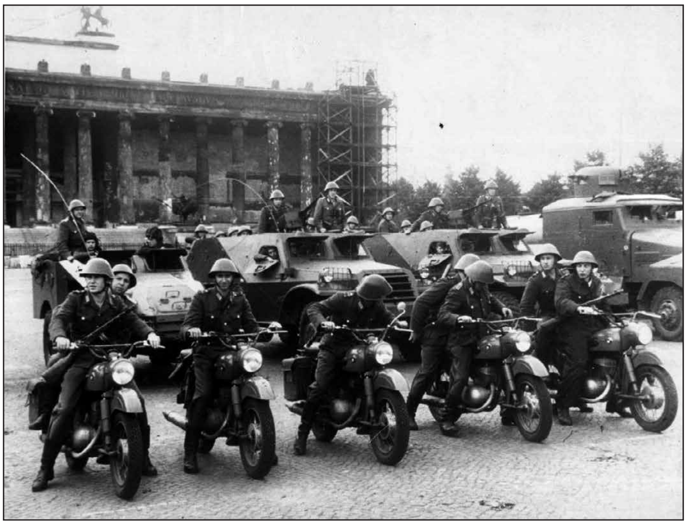


A BTR-152 APC just across the white line in the Soviet sector. The individual in civilian clothes looking through binoculars is probably *Stasi*, 13 August 1961. (Albert Grandolini)

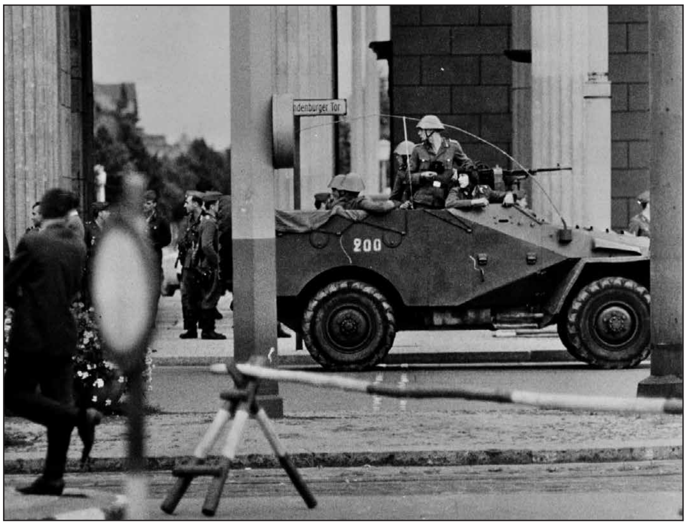
Brandenburg Gate

From about 0200, a gradual build-up of troops, trucks and armoured personnel carriers (APCs) began behind the iconic Brandenburg Gate on Unter den Linden, and in and around the governmental quarter either side of it. For the moment, they stayed out of sight and away from the famous columns, which were still notionally open for traffic. More trucks, APCs and even tanks were positioned in side streets near important junctions in case of a Western challenge or serious insurrection. At 0215, the West Berlin Police chief put whole force on alert as there was great uncertainty over what events might follow.

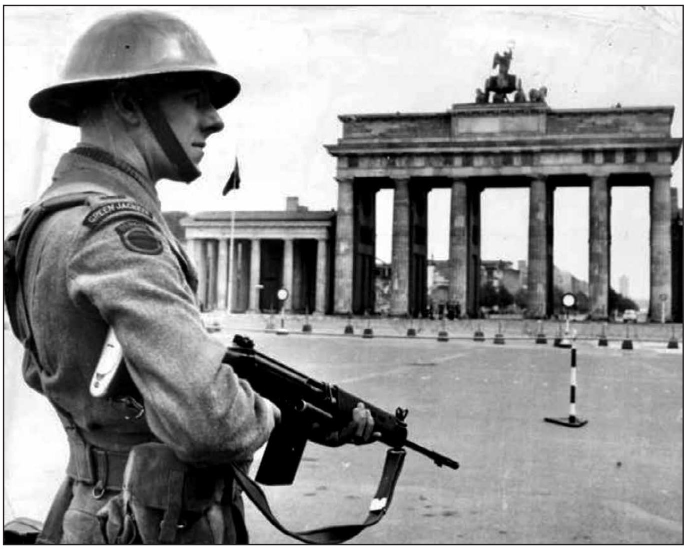
As the morning went on, the East Germans began a carefully choreographed pantomime, where they slowly took possession of the Brandenburg Gate – which was in the Soviet sector – testing to see if the Western Allies were going to respond. First, hundreds of *KdA* formed a dense human chain in front of the Gate, standing almost shoulder to shoulder and armed with submachine guns. By 0255, the Gate was effectively closed. Just after 0600, BTR-152 armoured personnel carriers of the *Grenztruppen* slowly advanced between the columns. The BTR-152s were accompanied by *Wasserwerfer SK II* water cannons for crowd control and which slowly edged forward and fanned out, pointing outwards to Straße des 17. Juni and Tiergarten in the British sector. The BTR-152s lined



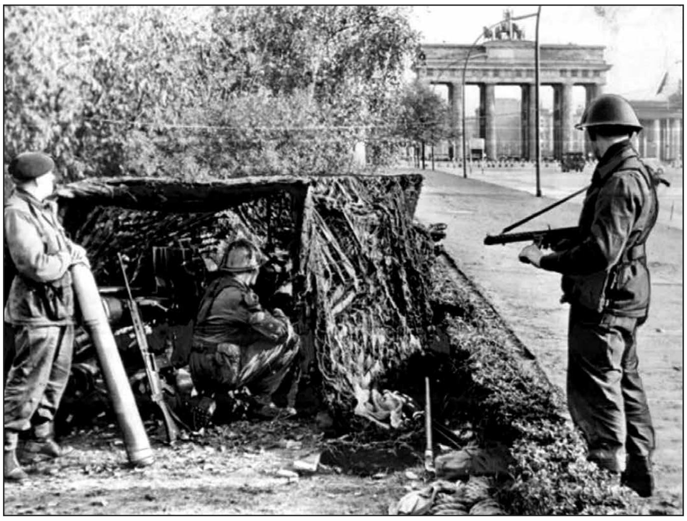
East German soldiers on motorbikes, parked up behind the Brandenburg Gate, 13 August 1961. Behind them is a BTR-40 scout car, two BTR-152 APCs and a *Wasserwerfer SK II* water cannon. The Soviet BTR-40 was called the SPW-40 in East German service. (US National Archives)



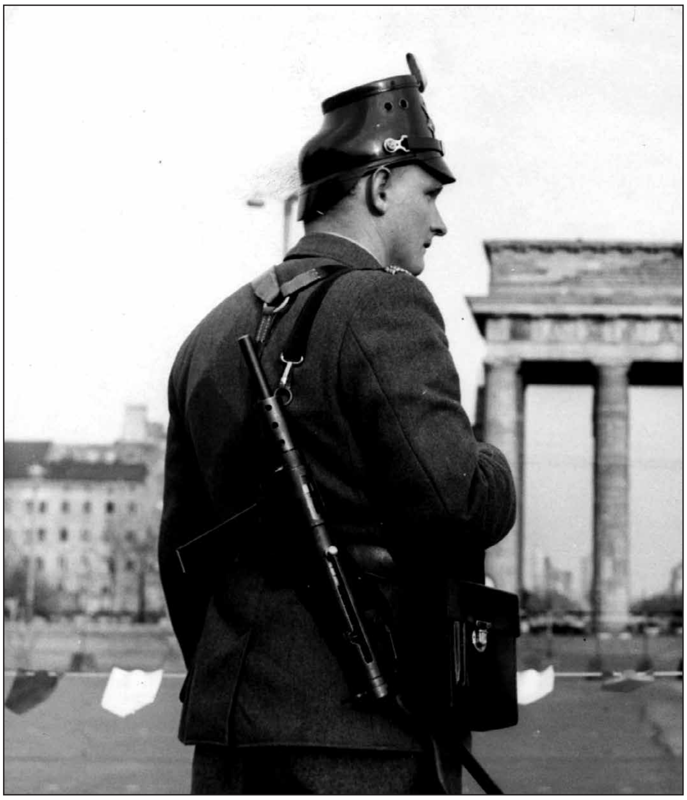
An *NVA/Grenztruppen* BTR-40 stands guard by the Brandenburg Gate, 13 August 1961. (US National Archives)



A British soldier of the Royal Green Jackets observes the border closure at the Brandenburg Gate, 13 August 1961. He is armed with an L1A1 Self Loading Rifle (SLR) and wears the badge of the Berlin Infantry Brigade on his sleeve. (Albert Grandolini)



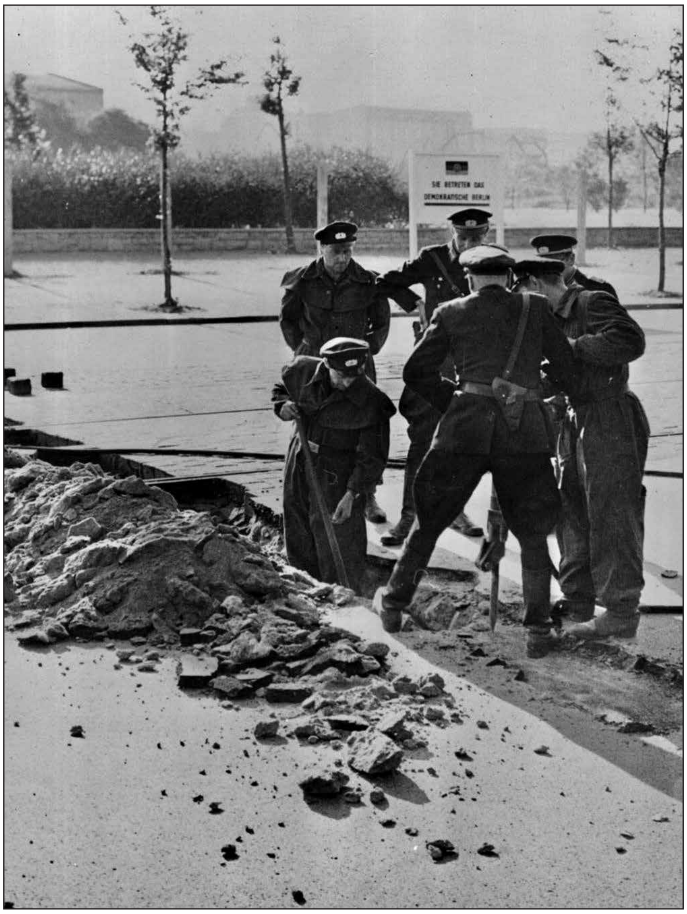
A British Army BAT (Battalion Anti-Tank) gun position on Straße des 17. Juni opposite the Brandenburg Gate on 13 August 1961. The BAT came in several variants, the one pictured likely being an L4 MOBAT, but all were 120mm recoilless rifles. The soldier on the left is holding a 120mm HESH (High Explosive Squash Head) round. An SLR rifle is leaning against the gun, and the soldier on the right is holding a Sterling submachine gun. (Albert Grandolini)



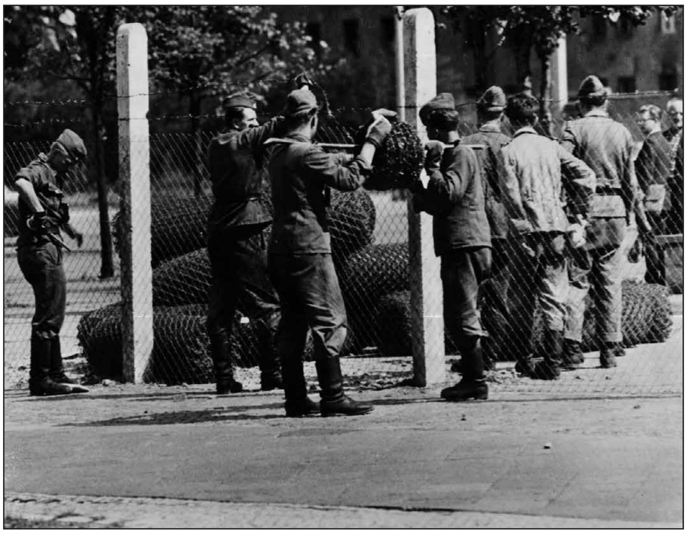
A West Berlin Policeman in his distinctive *Tschako* helmet. He is carrying a Second World War-vintage British Mk II Sten submachine gun. (Albert Grandolini)

up in front of the columns. The famous 18th century gate into Berlin was now closed and would not open again until 1989.[3] Then came the barbed wire…

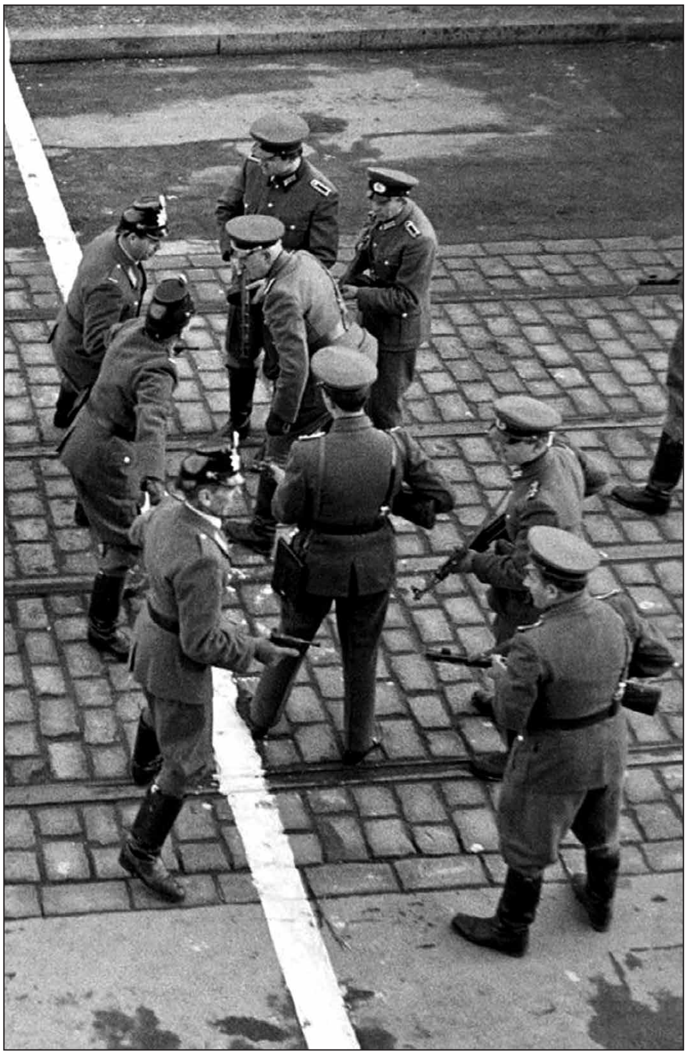
British troops hung back from the Brandenburg Gate to counter any border violation, to control any crowds and to stop angry West Berliners from defacing the Soviet War Memorial, which was near the Gate in the British sector. Any damage to the latter would have sparked a serious incident with the Soviets. British troops set up anti-tank gun positions on either side of the road, and were deployed in full combat order. Armed West Berlin Police were also deployed.


SIE BETRETEN DAS DEMOKRATISCHE BERLIN

East German police dig up the street near Potsdamer Platz to create an anti-vehicle trench as the first stage of a more permanent roadblock. The sign in the background reads 'You Are Entering Democratic Berlin', 13 August 1962. (US National Archives)



Wire fencing being installed on concrete posts, August 1961. (US National Archives)



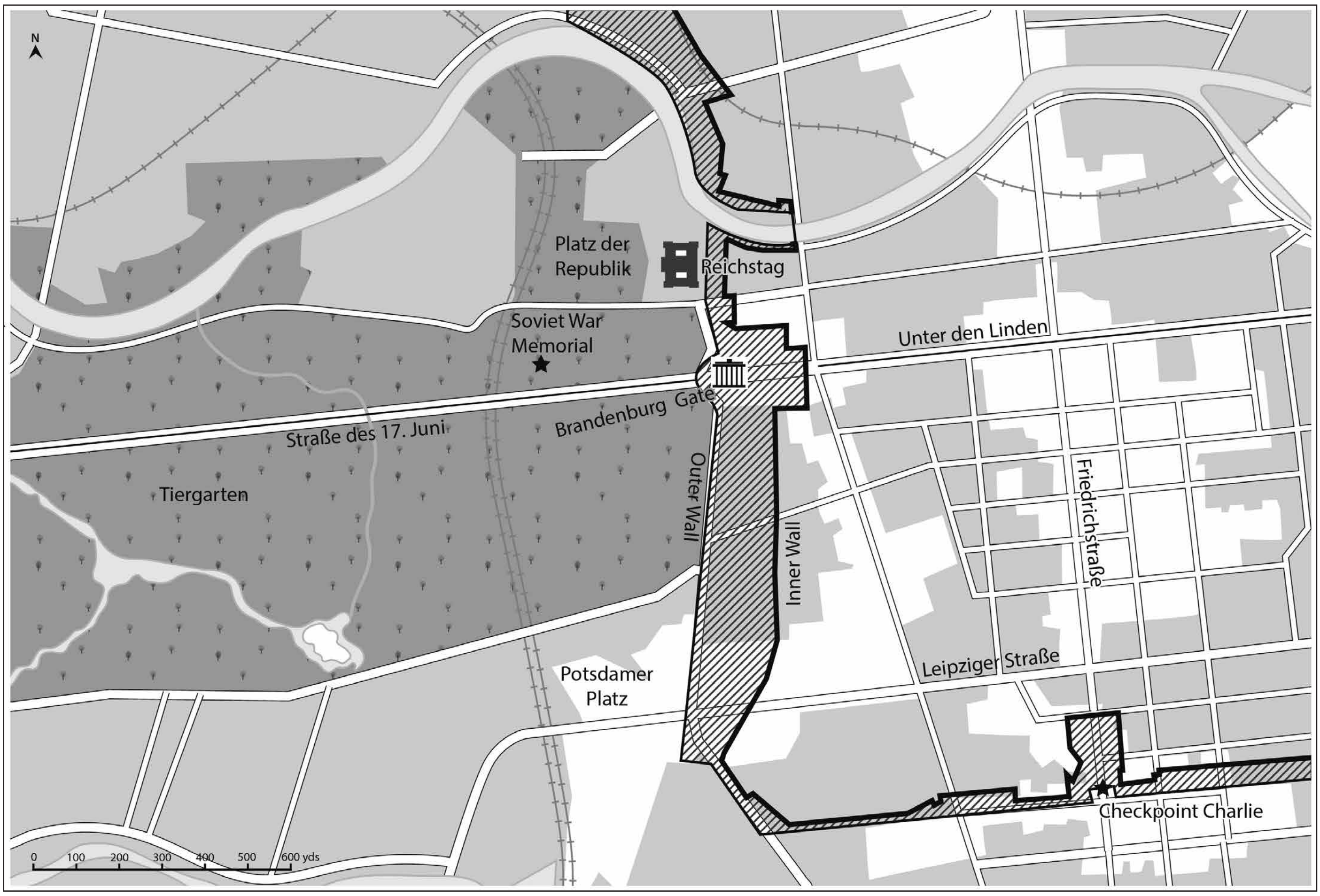
West Berlin Police and East German border guards face off over the white line denoting the sector border, 13 August 1961. (Albert Grandolini)

By about 0600, the concertina wire encirclement was completed, and West Berlin was cut off from the rest of the DDR. It had been achieved so smoothly, swiftly and silently that many residents had not even been woken up. Their peace was soon shattered by jackhammers, lifting of cobbles and digging holes in the ground for concrete posts. Two men would carry a roll of wire between them, unravelling it as they walked, with another man following behind, taking the strand and hammering it into the concrete posts that had just been erected. The numbers of troops swelled as *KdA* stragglers were rounded up and the *Grenzpionieren* were deployed – the pioneers would begin a 28-year-long construction project all the way around the city.

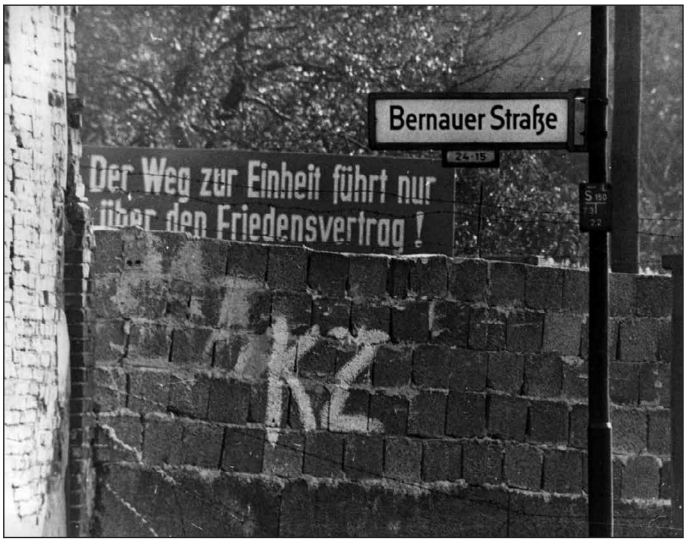
For many of the troops, they were beginning a long stint at the border, some remaining on duty or on alert for days. They were mobilised so quickly that little thought was given to preparing for a long stay and some militiamen could be seen wearing socks and sandals, the first footwear that came to hand after the knock on the door and they forgot to pack blankets or torches. The *KdA* brought up field kitchens to provide some sustenance, although the most the soldiers got was soup, and morale suffered as a result. There were also no arrangements for sleeping, so troops snatched a few hours when they could, inside empty or abandoned buildings or factory premises. As the various units reached full complement, and the reserves were brought in, some units were relieved on Sunday night, but there were reports of some *KdA* units staying on post for up to a week. Only when the risk of an armed intervention had passed, did unarmed *FDJ* members take over the vigil.

By the end of the day, 9.6km (5.96 miles) of wire barriers on concrete posts had been erected, and this process would carry on day and night until the whole of the 43.1km (26.8 miles) inner city border had been closed. With the completion of the 111.9km (69.5 miles) outer ring, the last escape route out of the Soviet Bloc had been blocked.

Sunday morning was the perfect time to pick for the operation as the city was typically quiet, with little to hamper the construction


N
Platz der Republik
Reichstag
Soviet War Memorial
Unter den Linden
Straße des 17. Juni
Brandenburg Gate
Tiergarten
Outer Wall
Inner Wall
Friedrichstraße
Leipziger Straße
Potsdamer Platz
Checkpoint Charlie
0 100 200 300 400 500 600 yds

Central Berlin, the Brandenburg Gate and Checkpoint Charlie. (George Anderson)

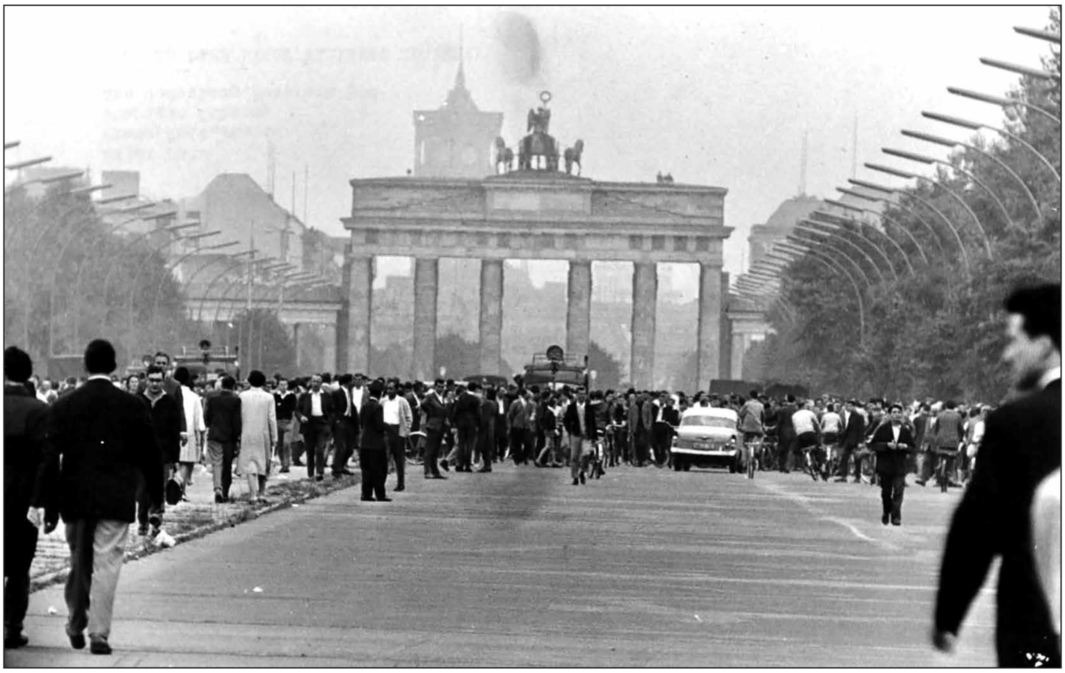

Bernauer Straße
24-15
Der Weg zur Einheit führt nur über den Friedensvertrag !
KZ

The East German banner reads 'The Road to Unity Can Only Be Achieved Through a Peace Treaty', while the graffiti says '*KZ*', the abbreviation for *Konzentrationslager* – Concentration Camp. 24 September 1961. (US National Archives)

workers and their escorts. It would also trap the border jumpers (*Grenzgänger*), who commuted East to West every weekday, in the East – anybody who turned up for work was sent back. The timing of the closure was designed to deliver a fait-accompli to the citizens of East Berlin, having the city fully closed off before it came to life again on Monday morning, thus hopefully avoiding potential unrest.

Of the 81 former crossing points between East and West Berlin, 68 were blocked with tank traps and concrete blocks and all 193 streets that straddled the border were closed off. The remaining 13

Heavily armed East German police use bayonets to push back the crowds seeking to cross into West Berlin, 14 August 1961. (CIA)



Crowds of West Berliners congregate in front of the now closed Brandenburg Gate, formerly a principal crossing point between the two Berlins, 13 August 1961. (US National Archives)

A *Wasserwerfer SK II* water cannon forces West Berliner protesters back from the Brandenburg Gate, 13 August 1961. (CIA)

intersections became designated crossing points – in effect, mini border posts. East Berliners wanting to visit West Berlin would need a special pass issued by the Interior Ministry (which would be seldom granted in practice), Allied military and government personnel were restricted to just three crossings and all 'Foreigners' had to use Checkpoint 'Charlie' on Friedrichstraße.[4] At the Friedrichstraße crossing point, an East German border guard called Hagen Koch was given a pot of white paint and told to paint a white line, perhaps 6 inches wide, marking the sector border. This simple line came to represent the meeting points of two 'tectonic plates', the capitalist West and the communist East, and would be witness to some notable 'seismic' events during the Cold War.

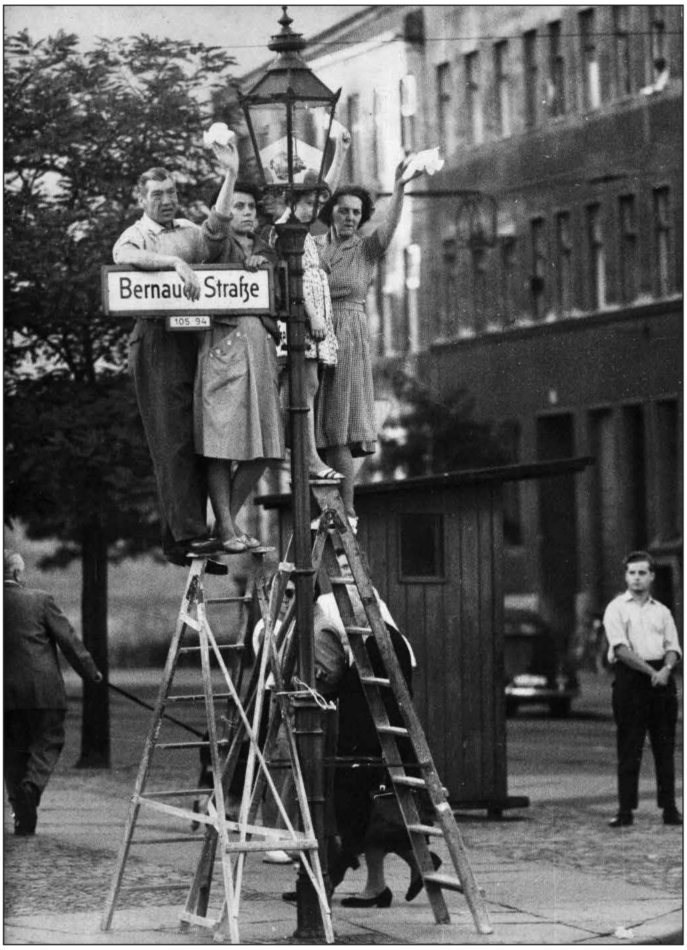
The impeccably planned coup de main operation to seal the border was completed by 0600 and was a spectacular success. Sunday 13 August 1961 became known as *Stacheldrahtsonntag* – Barbed Wire Sunday – and would propel Honecker to the very top of the Party. They had completely sealed off the 155km (96 mile) long 'Ring um Berlin', including the 43.1km (26.8 mile) inner city sector border (*Innerstädtische Grenze Berlin*) through Berlin and the 111.9km (69.5 mile) outer border with the DDR with barbed or concertina wire – all without a single shot being fired.

Berliners React

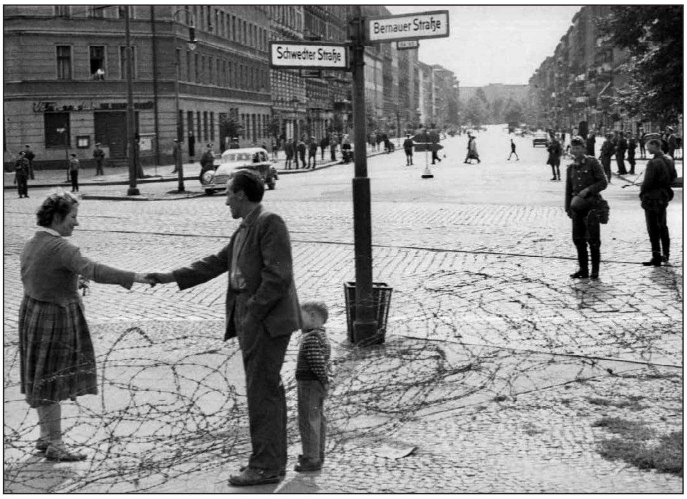
From about 0800, crowds of miserable looking East Berliners began to gather on street corners to watch the ditches being dug and the wire going down, with the bitter realisation that they had left it too late and were now trapped behind Ulbricht's barbed wire barrier. In the East, citizens were generally held well back from the action, although groups of youths began protesting angrily, chanting '*KZ*' (for *Konzentrationslager* – Concentration Camp, and all that signified) at the police and were pushed back by the *KdA* and dispersed by tear gas.[5]

Big crowds gathered on Alexanderplatz and the Party and *SED* deployed political agitators amongst the crowds promoting the official position that the barbed wire was forming a 'protective' barrier to stop the West plundering the DDR and tried to fuel anti-Western sentiment. The *Stasi* were deployed widely across the city to prevent any demonstrations against the closure and to keep a watchful eye on the police and military forces to ensure they kept to their brief and did not waver –any troublemakers were swiftly identified and arrested. Other groups were dispersed by *Vopos* at bayonet point.

As the day broke, large crowds of West Berliners gathered on the Western side of the Brandenburg Gate and some began throwing stones and yelling abuse at the East German border guards, who responded with water cannons. Despite the presence of heavily armed troops backed by rows of armoured cars, some tried to trample down the barbed wire, but they were repelled by East



Citizens of West Berlin stand on ladders to greet friends and loved ones on the Eastern side of the Berlin Wall, Bernauer Straße, 16 September 1961. (US National Archives)

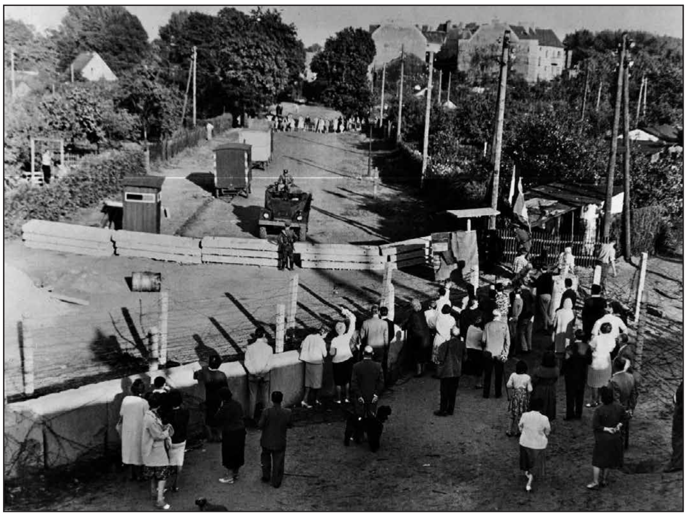


Two people, split by a coil of barbed wire. Another photo taken just before shows the little boy being embraced by the woman while he is held over the wire. On the corner of Schwedter Straße and Bernauer Straße, 13 August 1961. (US National Archives)

German Riot Police with tear gas and fixed bayonets. The West German police soon intervened and dispersed the crowds, anxious to avoid provocation.

Combined with Berlin's natural topography, the barbed wire Wall created an interesting shape through the city, twisting and turning in seemingly random directions. The true shape of the division would only become apparent after several years when the infamous Death Strip had been completed and when seen from the air. To quote the author and journalist Peter Millar, '*from the air it looked not so much like a ribbon running round the Western half of the city as masking tape sealing it off*' – the grey 'Death Strip' created an unnatural scar right through the heart of the city.

Some West Berliners were trapped in the Soviet sector when they were just visiting friends or shopping and did not know if they would be able to return to the West, others began to stockpile food fearing another blockade style siege. Similarly, foreigners found themselves caught on the wrong side of the Wall and did not know whether they would be allowed home. As it happened, most West Berliners and foreigners would be allowed back across once their papers had been checked. Allied personnel took their access to the East for granted, enjoying free access as and when they chose to go shopping or visit the theatre, but now they would face queues and border checks by East German troops just like everyone else. These restrictions would soon cause serious problems.



An elevated view shows the real divide between friends and family. A small crowd of West Berliners gather behind the block and barbed wire first generation Wall. Beyond that lies a further concrete barrier and an East German armoured car and finally, behind a further fence, are individuals trapped in the East. This limited view would only last a few short weeks, before the inner (or hinterland) Wall stopped East Berlin citizens from getting anywhere near the actual border. (US National Archives)

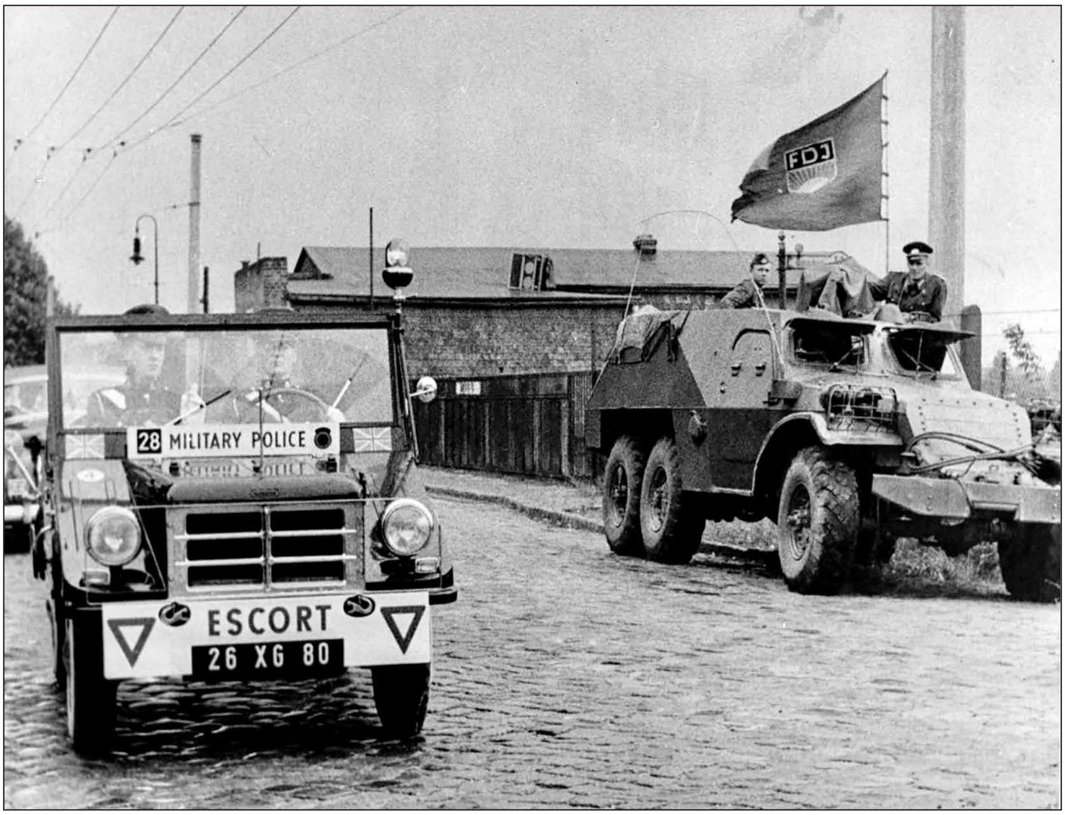
Families in West Berlin desperately seek a glimpse of their loved ones on the other side of the Wall. August 1961. (US National Archives)

Separation

All along the closed border individual tragedies played out, with families, friends and colleagues separated by the wire and later the Wall. There were heartrending images of distressed Berliners from

Achtung!
Sie verlassen
jetzt
West-Berlin

A British Military Policeman observes activity at the border through the sunroof of his Volkswagen. (CIA)



The British Commandant on a flag-flying tour around East Berlin, escorted by military police in a DKW (Auto-Union) Munga 4x4 vehicle and wearing their dress uniforms. They are passing an East German BTR-152 APC flying a *FDJ* flag, but it appears to be occupied by *Vopos* or *Grenztruppen*. The DKW Munga was made by the West German automotive group Auto-Union. The name 'Munga' came from the German phrase: *mehrzweck universal geländewagen mit allradantrieb*, which translates as: multi-purpose universal cross-country car with all-wheel drive. It was adopted by the *Bundeswehr* in the late 1950s and also supplied to the British garrison in Berlin as part of war reparations. (US National Archives)

both side of the new divide, straining to see their loved ones over the top of the hastily built barriers, climbing up step ladders and even hanging from lampposts to catch a view or a wave. Crowds in the East were kept well back from the Wall itself, and the East German authorities even installed screens to block the view (and also hide what they were doing from the prying eyes of the Western spies). As the Wall became increasingly formidable, these stolen glimpses would be the last they would see of their friends and families for many years. Two days later, all the phone lines between East and West Berlin (and the West in general) were cut off, so families could no longer even talk to each other.

West Caught Napping

The West Berlin city authorities, the American, British and French Berlin garrisons, London, Washington and Paris had all been caught completely unaware by East Germany's decision to close the border. The Allied intelligence gathering operation had picked up rumours that something was about to happen, but without any specifics or hard evidence, their reports had not been taken seriously.

For the teams on the ground, the first signs that something unusual was underway was when several S-Bahn trains were stopped and turned back. The police were initially concerned that the activity in the East would develop into the much-feared full-blown invasion of West Berlin and top-secret contingency plans were dusted off just in case. However, as the night went on, it became clear that the East Germans were staying strictly within their own sector. Military planners had considered the possibility of a full-blown invasion of the Western sectors or varying degrees of harassment and/or blockade, but no one had foreseen the possibility of a physical barrier between the East and West controlled sectors.

Allied commanders in the city immediately sought permission from higher authority to intervene and use the limited armour they had to bulldoze the growing barbed wire barrier, but they were met with stony silence while Washington, London and Paris woke up to the problem and considered their options. The West were desperate to avoid a confrontation that could lead to war, but to the West Berliners, their prudence and apparent inactivity began to look like they were condoning East Germany's actions and abandoning West Berlin to an uncertain fate.

At around 0330, E. Allan Lightner Jr., the top US diplomatic official in Berlin sent one of his team to see what was going on. He was held up at the inter-sector border but demanded his right of access and was let through, driving around the East of the city, and witnessing Operation Rose as it unfolded. He also witnessed the dawning horror and despair of the East Berlin citizens. Various other military patrols were sent out to get a feeling for the extent of the operation, and regular reports came in from the West Berlin Police, building into a picture for their commanders. By 0800 they had a good idea of the extent of the operation.

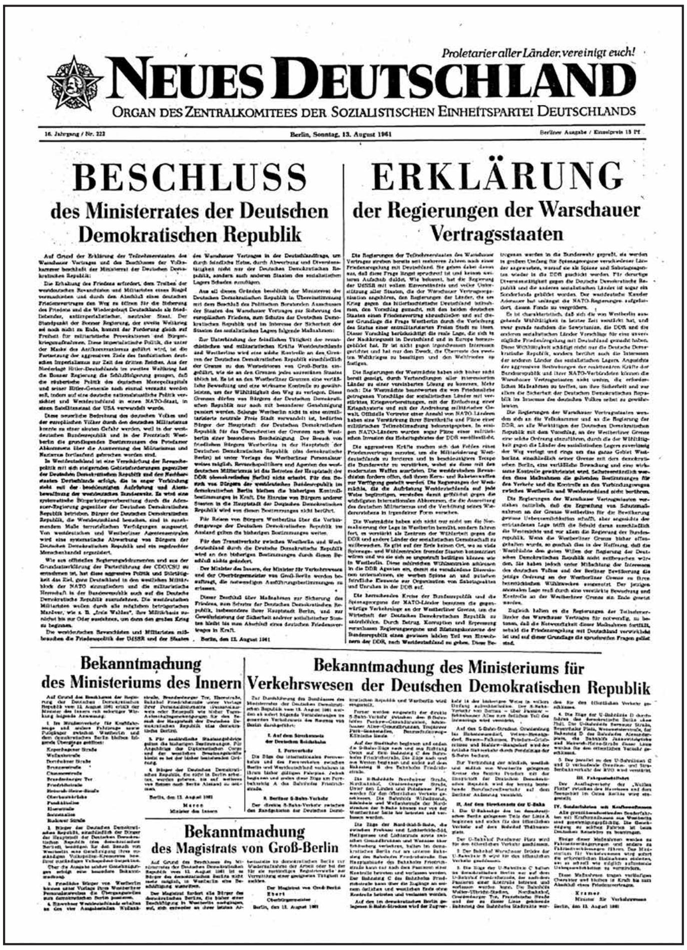
The Kommandatura met at 1000 and discussed possible scenarios and counter measures.[6] The Soviets had announced that they, and the rest of the Warsaw Pact, supported the action, leaving the West in no doubt that a Western military response would lead to a fuller confrontation. Brandt joined the meeting at 1100 but was disappointed at the lack of proposed action.

Lightner, who would have a big part to play in events over the following weeks, sent the first report to US Secretary of State Dean Rusk at 1100 Berlin time (0500 Washington time), sending a further summary of the day's action at 2200. The decision to start Operation Rose in the early hours of a Sunday morning succeeded in catching Berliners' out, but given the 6-hour time difference with Washington DC, it meant that the White House, State Department and Pentagon were also wrong footed. Officials were woken up from their Sunday lay-ins, summonsed from their breakfasts or intercepted at church or on the golf course and the offices of power were soon buzzing. In his report, Lightner confirmed the key pieces of news that Western military and civilian personnel were not being impeded within the city, that things were relatively peaceful in the East German sectors of the city and across the rest of the DDR, and the Soviets were, for the time being, keeping their distance. This was quickly passed up the chain of command and shared with other branches of the government and allies.

The British Commandant of Berlin took a high-profile excursion into the East, exercising his right of access and parading round in his shiny staff car, in a small convoy of highly polished vehicles, escorted by military police in their best uniforms, much to the bemusement of the East Germans.

They also sent up the de Havilland Canada DHC-1 Chipmunk T.10 based at RAF Gatow. The Chipmunk was a small two-seater aircraft operated by BRIXMIS and was authorised to fly anywhere within the Berlin Control Zone (BCZ). The BCZ was a twenty-mile radius circle around the Allied Control Council building in Schönberg and thanks to a 1945 agreement, allied aircraft were allowed to fly anywhere in that circle, covering all of metropolitan Berlin including the Soviet sector and into the DDR. Flying at around 500ft, the BRIXMIS observer was able to observe and photograph the Wall going up, providing an invaluable real-time picture of events to the allied military authorities.

A series of decrees from the East German authorities over the morning of the 13th reassured the Western Allies that the activity was not a pre-cursor to an invasion of the city, nor an interruption to access routes or a replay of the 1948 blockade. The Western media also provided eyewitness accounts of what was going on behind the barbed wire, confirming that it was just an East German domestic operation. Leaders in London, Paris and Washington began considering how they should respond.


Proletarier aller Länder, vereinigt euch!

NEUES DEUTSCHLAND

ORGAN DES ZENTRALKOMITEES DER SOZIALISTISCHEN EINHEITSPARTEI DEUTSCHLANDS

16. Jahrgang / Nr. 222

Berlin, Sonntag, 13. August 1961

Berliner Ausgabe / Einzelpreis 15 Pf

BESCHLUSS
des Ministerrates der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik

ERKLÄRUNG
der Regierungen der Warschauer Vertragsstaaten

Bekanntmachung
des Ministeriums des Innern

Bekanntmachung des Ministeriums für Verkehrswesen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik

Bekanntmachung
des Magistrats von Groß-Berlin

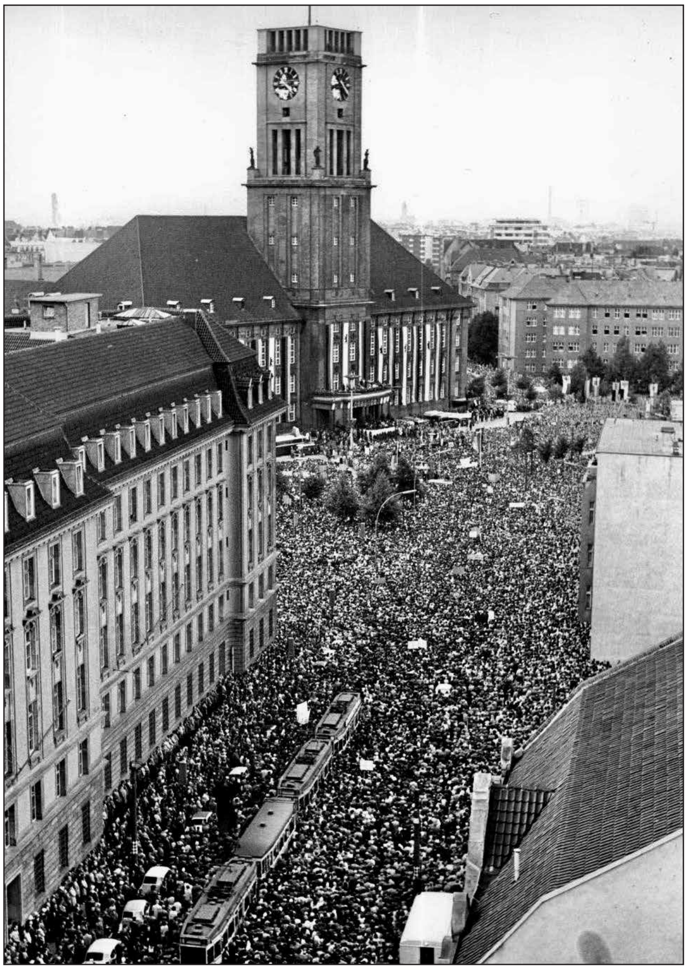
The front page of *Neues Deutschland* on 13 August 1961. (Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv)

DDR Official Response

As was the norm in the DDR, the *SED* relied on the state-controlled media to explain to the East German people, and the rest of the world, the momentous decisions that had been played out during the night of the 12-13 August 1961. In a carefully orchestrated PR campaign, the first official word was the 0111 'Declaration of the Governments of the Warsaw Treaty States' that arrived on the newswires in Berlin and around the world. This was to leave the West in no doubt as to who was behind the night's activity. At 0205, a spokesman on *Berliner Rundfunk*, the state radio station, broadcast the whole of the communique, which took a whole seven minutes to read. At 0400, the communique was read again, along with the 'Decision of the Council of Ministers', with the presenter speaking non-stop for 19 minutes, and this was repeated on *Berliner Rundfunk* and the other radio stations in the DDR all day. The first edition of *Neues Deutschland*, the official newspaper of the *SED*, ran both the 'Decision of the Council of Ministers' and the Warsaw Pact communique in full on the front page.

For many of the soldiers, policemen, border guards and militia on duty, reading this newspaper was their first realisation that they were part of a huge operation, and for East Berlin's citizens it was the first news that their lives had just changed beyond all recognition. The articles included the first mention of the *Antifaschistischer Schutzwall* – the Anti-Fascist Protection Barrier – a twisted euphemism that would stay with the Wall as it developed over the decades. They welcomed the fact that:

> … children are now protected from child-stealers; families are protected from the blackmailing snoopers of the human trafficking headquarters; businesses are protected from the head-hunters; people are protected from the monsters, order from the violators of order, the industrious from the indolent and speculators, the calm and security of our citizens from the Cold War exponents.



An estimated 250,000 people turn out to listen to West Berlin Mayor Willi Brandt denounce the closing of the border, 16 August 1961. (CIA)

The headline from the *FDGB* trade union newspaper *Tribüne* read '*Defiance of the Sabre-Rattlers*' and '*… the fist of the workers' and peasants' power smashed right into the face of the mad militaristic monster*'.[7] Other newspapers from the DDR dutifully followed the lead from Berlin, celebrating the closure as a 'triumph', although the feeling on the streets of East Berlin was far from triumphant.

When East Berlin's workers returned to their offices and factories on Monday morning, they were ushered into briefings with Party officials to explain the reasons behind the closure. They were told that it had been '*forced*' on the people of the DDR by the '*enemy*', the '*vengeful and militaristic*' powers of West Germany and West Berlin. The closure would stop the '*people traffickers*', who were '*preying*' on the good citizens of the DDR and hamper efforts of Western 'espionage centres', which were actively recruiting the '*deceived people*', that is, the refugees, as spies and saboteurs.[8] The front page of *Neues Deutschland* on Monday morning had a picture of a pair of smiling *KdA* militiamen, clutching their weapons.

It is questionable how much of this story was believed by the average worker in East Berlin, given that only a few days before they could have seen for themselves what it was like in the Western sectors and spoken to friends, colleagues and family there. Outside of the capital, it was a different story and the Party organisation and state-controlled media ensured that information was tightly curated to support the Party line.

The first official word from Walter Ulbricht came on Friday 18 August in a radio and television address, justifying the closure because of the West's '*systematic plans for a civil war*', by '*revenge – seeking and militaristic forces*'. He argued that they were fully justified in deploying tanks and artillery during the operation as '*Provocateurs were dissuaded from the start from provoking dangerous incidents*'. '*… the German working class is no longer defenceless but has at its disposal tanks and cannon and everything that is necessary for defence*'. The '*sole purpose*' of the Wall was to protect the citizens of East Germany from the West's threat '*reliable safeguards and effective control to be established around the whole territory of West Berlin*', with the clear inference that the access routes would be left open.

General Lucius Clay discusses the Berlin Situation with President Kennedy at the White House. (US National Archives)

It should be noted that many East Germans approved of the Wall. This was expected from the Party faithful, but many normal citizens bought into the blanket propaganda emanating from the *SED* controlled media, believing that the *Antifaschistischer Schutzwall* was actually a positive stabilising influence on the country, keeping the Western imperialist 'fascists' out and stopping the West's 'people trafficking' or 'brain drain'. There was genuine resentment from some in East Berlin that 'Westies' were coming over with their salaries, emptying the shelves in East Berlin's shops and making full use of East Berlin's services, such as hairdressers, all at bargain prices and without paying a pfennig in taxes. The average East German citizen, however, had no idea just how bad the economic situation for the ruling *SED* was, and how it threatened the regime.

International Reaction

News broke slowly in London and Washington. Kennedy was informed while on his yacht and his initial response was pragmatic; he had been expecting some sort of action in the city and privately expressed relief that Khrushchev had not gone all the way and invaded the west half of the city: *'Khrushchev would not have had a wall built if he really wanted to take West Berlin. If he were to occupy the whole city, he wouldn't need a wall …. It's not a particularly pleasant solution, but a wall is a damned sight better than a war'.*

After all, the three defining principles of the Western Allies' policy in the city had not been affected:

- The presence of the Western powers in Berlin
- Free access routes
- The right of self-determination for West Berliners

The post-blockade 1949 Four Powers Agreement that governed movement around the city had been contravened, but the three guiding principles were still intact.[9] Some historians have gone so far as to suggest that a secret deal was done between Khrushchev and Kennedy, via the Robert Kennedy/Georgi Bolshakov back-channel, that the US would not intervene in the border closure if the Soviet Union did not threaten the status of West Berlin. Unfortunately, no records were kept of these conversations and nothing to back the theory up has emerged from the archives, but it seems highly probable that some kind of reassurances were passed back and forth via this secret channel.

In Washington's diplomatic circles, the overwhelming feeling was of relief that West Berlin remained intact and open, but they could not admit that publicly. The official US response was slow to materialise and when it came, it skirted round any provocative language that could have been misinterpreted and was certainly more measured than Kennedy's very bullish address to the American people only 20 days previously. However, it did not shy away from pointing out the reality that the only way the communists could stop their people from seeking a better life in the West was to lock them in – a clear demonstration that the communist system was not working. The communique criticised the blatant contravention of the Four Power agreement, but, as far as the State Department was concerned, the development did not affect the Allies' status in the city or the hotly contested rights of access. The closure of the border would be protested through the appropriate diplomatic channels.

Moscow watchers in Washington would have also realised that the closure relieved some of the pressure from Khrushchev in the lead up to October's Party Congress. It demonstrated his decisiveness and leadership while the West showed weakness in their lack of response.

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West Berliners welcome the American battle group to Berlin, 20 August 1961. (Albert Grandolini)

In the background, however, the US war machine began to stir. On 18 August, Elvis J. Stahr Jr, the Secretary of the Army, announced that around 84,000 servicemen who were due to be discharged in the final quarter of 1961 and the first half of 1962 would have their service extended. He also extended the tours of personnel serving in Germany and Japan by six months and activated 113 reserve units, adding 23,000 troops to the forces available. 3,000 troops were also to be deployed to Europe, bringing the forces stationed there up to full strength.

The British and French responses to the events in Berlin reflected their preoccupations with their own foreign policy challenges, as they both struggled with their post-war colonial legacies. Great Britain was struggling with the cost of maintaining an army in Germany and was in the process of running down its forces there, while in the Middle East, British forces were facing down a belligerent Iraq over Kuwait. France was bogged down in Algeria having finally extricated themselves from a costly and lengthy campaign in Indochina. Neither country was in the mood to expend human and financial capital on the defence of Berlin. Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister, did not think the news from Berlin sufficiently urgent to cancel his weekend's grouse shoot and French President General De Gaulle did not return to Paris from his country home until the following Thursday. However, De Gaulle did order reinforcements of French ground and air forces in West Germany and Great Britain reinforced Royal Air Force units. Khrushchev rammed home the point by reinforcing the East German front with additional troops and holding high-profile exercises in the week after the closure, simulating a war over Berlin which included deployment of tactical battlefield nuclear weapons.

West Berliners welcome the American troops to Berlin, seem here driving an M38A1C jeep armed with an M40A1 106mm recoilless rifle. 20 August 1961. (US National Archives)

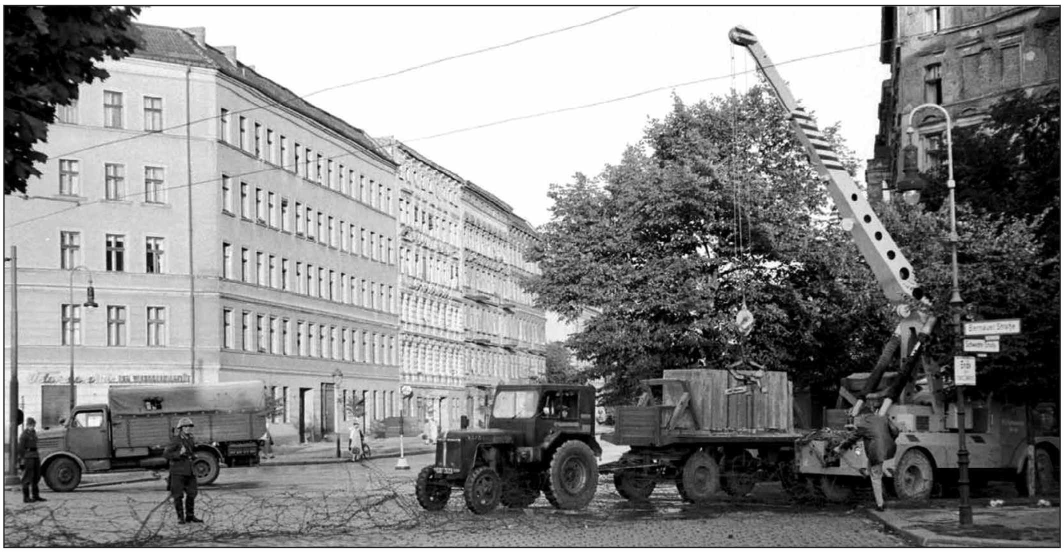
With Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson looking on, West Berlin Mayor Willi Brandt welcomes Col. Glover S. Johns Jr. and the 1st Battle Group, 20 August 1961. (CIA)

It was a different story for West Berlin Mayor, Willi Brandt, who had been in Nuremburg for an election rally (he was running for Chancellor against Konrad Adenauer, making Berlin's woes a key part of his campaign). Brandt was born Herbert Ernst Karl Frahm in 1913, the illegitimate son of a Lübeck shop assistant and became involved with Left-wing politics in his teens. To avoid arrest by the incoming Nazi government, Frahm chose to flee to Norway in April 1933, where he changed his name to Willi Brandt and carried on his fight against Hitler's regime. When the Germans invaded Norway in 1940, Brandt fled to neutral Sweden where he continued his work. After reporting on the Nuremberg Trials for Norwegian media, he resumed his political career in Berlin with the *SPD*, becoming mayor in 1957.

On 13 August, Brandt was en route to Kiel for another campaign rally when he was told about the border closure and caught a plane immediately back to Berlin. Fully briefed on the closure, Brandt and his colleagues in the West Berlin Senat were concerned at the apparent complacency of their Allied protectors and called for immediate intervention by the Allied forces stationed in the city. The US, British and French commanders, however, were still waiting for orders. The Commander of US Forces unhelpfully pointed out that the barrier had been constructed a metre or so inside the Soviet sector, so to intervene and knock the Wall down would involve crossing into a sector that they had no jurisdiction over. However, fearful of another blockade, Willy Brandt requested that Allied forces in Berlin were reinforced and that some troops were rotated in and out of the city to re-emphasise the ongoing rights of access. On Wednesday 16 August 1961, an estimated 250,000 West Berliners demonstrated in front of Schöneberg Town Hall in West Berlin calling on the West to respond to the Wall and to guarantee their freedom.

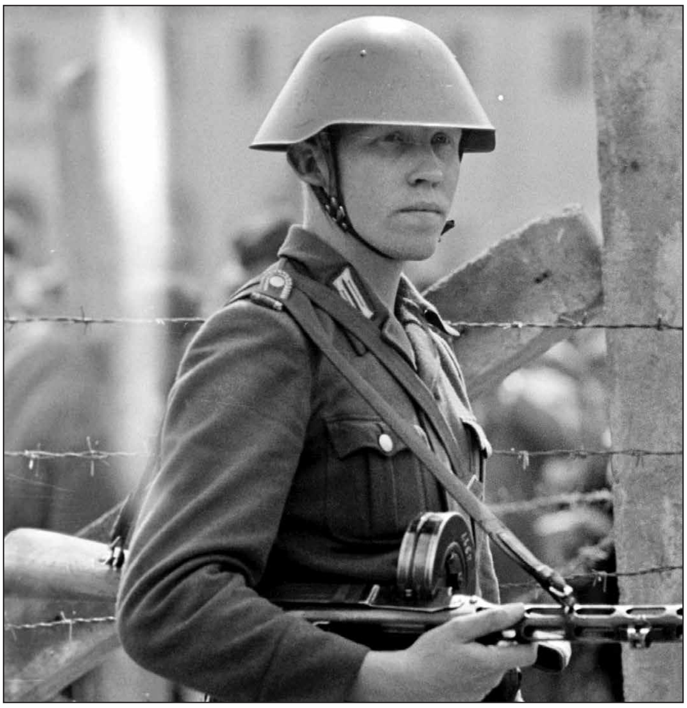
As more reports filtered across the Atlantic, Washington realised that their inactivity was not going to be accepted by the West Berliners (in particular, Brandt), the West Germans and crucially, the international community. Berliners were feeling isolated and abandoned, but Kennedy was not going to let them dictate US policy and for the time being, as it seemed the communists were not planning on invading the Western sectors of the city, he would not be rushed into anything.

However, in an unprecedented move, Brandt wrote directly to Kennedy in unusually frank terms. With the minimum of platitudes, Brandt launched into a lecture about how the East Germans and Soviets had torn up the Four Power status of the city and highlighted the negative implications for the future of Berlin and Germany.



An East German work crew use a crane to unload concrete blocks to begin the Wall construction at the end of Bernauer Straße, August 1961. (Albert Grandolini)

Grenztruppen officers watch the construction of the Wall, August 1961. (US National Archives)



A *Grenzsoldat* of the *Grenztruppen der DDR* guarding construction of the Wall, armed with a MPi41 (PPSh-41) submachine gun and wearing the distinctive M56 *Stahlhelm* helmet. (Albert Grandolini)

Specifically, he demanded that the remaining members of the occupying powers; the USA, Great Britain and France, '*proclaim a Three-Power status for West Berlin*', and '*reiterate their guarantee to remain present in West Berlin until German reunification …*'. He also insisted the Western powers confirm that the '*German Question*' had not been settled by the East German action and suggested the matter be raised with the United Nations '*on the grounds that the Soviet Union has violated the Declaration of Human Rights in an egregious manner*'. He acknowledged that there was little chance that these measures would realistically change anything on the ground, but he requested that '*the American garrison … be reinforced in demonstrable form*' to deter any Soviet expansion into West Berlin.[10]

This was strong stuff from a German local government official direct to the President of the United States. To add insult to injury, a copy of the letter was leaked to the press, thus giving Kennedy limited room to manoeuvre. In it, Brandt appealed directly to the international community for action:

'*We are not afraid …… Berlin expects more than words. Berlin expects political action*'.

The White House was furious at Brandt's impertinence, his letter having crossed all the lines of diplomatic convention. Initially, Kennedy took the letter as a grandstanding ploy by Brandt to aid his election campaign but ever conscious of international opinion, he decided that a high-profile response was required and ordered his Vice President, Lyndon B. Johnson (known as LBJ), to West Berlin along with the retired General Lucius Clay, the former Governor of the American Zone of Germany and hero of the Berlin Airlift.

Johnson was to personally deliver his reply to Brandt and such high-profile envoys would hopefully reassure the citizens of the Western sectors that the US were looking out for them. LBJ was not impressed at having to travel to Berlin at JFK's behest at this dangerous time, putting himself right in the firing line.

On 19 August 1961, LBJ and General Clay arrived in Berlin having lunched earlier in the day with Chancellor Adenauer in Bonn. Adenauer had been criticised in the West German media for not immediately travelling to the city to demonstrate his support for West Berliners. He had hoped to join LBJ on the hop from Bonn to Berlin, but the Americans refused, on the grounds that offering a ride may been seen as showing a preference to Adenauer in the forthcoming German election. This was despite Willi Brandt, Adenauer's rival, benefitting from the profile that a US Vice Presidential visit to his city would bring. Adenauer did not make it to the city until the 22nd.

The Vice President and the hero of the Berlin Airlift received a rapturous reception, with hundreds of thousands of Berliners lining the streets, cheering their American 'Knights in Shining Armour'. The White House had scripted LBJ's every word, which were well received by the Berlin population, and he was soon enjoying himself, basking in the glory.

The following morning, they got down to business and JFK's letter was delivered. Kennedy's reply was heartfelt and genuine but concurred with Brandt's pessimistic assessment that there was little that could be done to reverse Ulbricht's initiative, short of war. He felt the closure '*represents a resounding confession of failure and of political weakness*'. He discounted most of Brandt's suggestions/demands but agreed to a '*significant reinforcement of the Western garrisons*', which would send a strong signal to Moscow that the Allies had no intention of leaving. Kennedy also said he would '*continue and accelerate the broad build-up of the military strength of the West*' to counter the Soviet threat. He left Brandt in no doubt that the US and its NATO allies were not going to abandon the city: '*West Berlin today is more important than ever, and its mission to stand for freedom has never been so important as now*'.[11]

Privately, LBJ delivered a stinging rebuke for Brandt's impertinence in writing directly to Kennedy but while he was suitably chastened, Brandt had achieved what he set out to do; elicit a heavyweight response to the crisis in his city.

Battle Group

Against the advice of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense, Kennedy decided to send a reinforced battle group into Berlin, implementing one of the LIVE OAK contingency scenarios that planners had put in place after Eisenhower's 1958 tussle with Khrushchev. Recognising the political, psychological and PR value of a military intervention, a force of around 1,500 troops was to travel to West Berlin along the road corridor through East Germany. The heavily armed convoy from the 1st Battle Group of the 8th Infantry Division, under the command of Second World War veteran Colonel Glover S. Johns Jr, was to comprise several rifle companies in full combat gear, mess trailers, ammo trucks, and a 105mm howitzer battery (but no tanks); a clear signal that these were fighting troops, not just garrison fillers. Their orders were to probe along the main access highway, bypassing all administrative checkpoints and undefended obstacles. The Rules of Engagement (ROE) anticipated that there could be some shooting and if they were challenged by a superior military force, they were to stand their ground and defend themselves, withdrawing if the commander on the ground felt he was in danger of being cut off or overrun. Washington was therefore aware that there could be escalation into a more serious confrontation.

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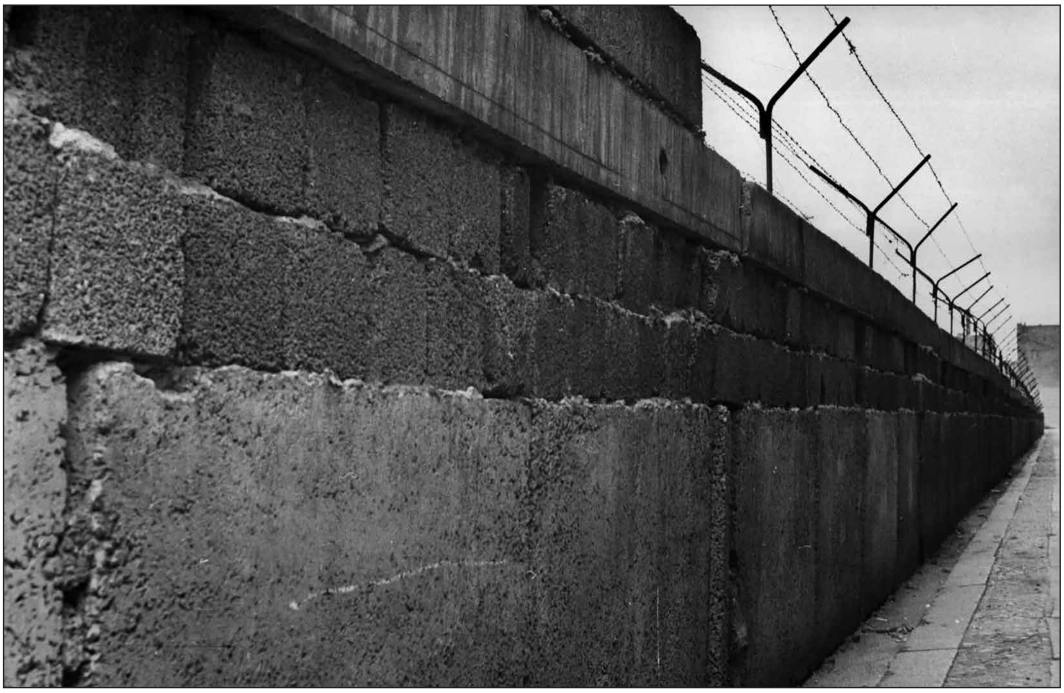
A large group of *NVA* soldiers gather at a crossing point as construction crews work behind them. (Albert Grandolini)

The convoy left their barracks in Mannheim, West Germany, on the morning of the 19 August, setting up camp at Brunswick

Schwedter Straße
222-224
Ende
des
franz. Sektors

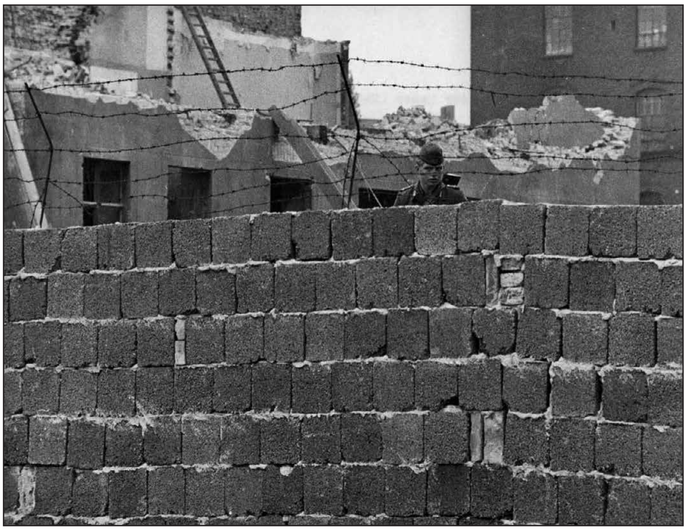
Workers begin to replace the wire with concrete blocks at the corner of Schwedter Straße and Bernauer Straße, August 1961. (Albert Grandolini)



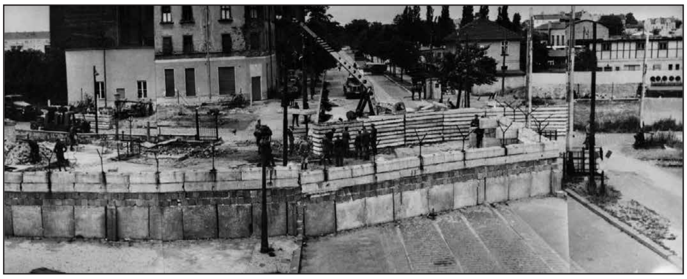
Close up image of the first generation Wall at Sebastionstraße in the District of Kreuzberg, showing a base of concrete slabs, then breeze blocks, then concrete lintels and finally barbed wire on Y shaped outriggers. (US National Archives)

(Braunschweig), close to the border with East Germany. At 0630 on the morning of Sunday 20 August the first vehicles of the battle group approached the Soviet checkpoint at Marienborn, where the autobahn entered East Germany. The Soviets did their best to delay the convoy at the border by insisting on counting every soldier, but some robust marshalling by Colonel Johns quickly bypassed the Soviet barriers and the convoy began the slow journey across East Germany. They made a triumphal entrance to the city later that afternoon, parading in full battle gear in front of Vice President Johnson, General Clay and a very appreciative West Berlin population.

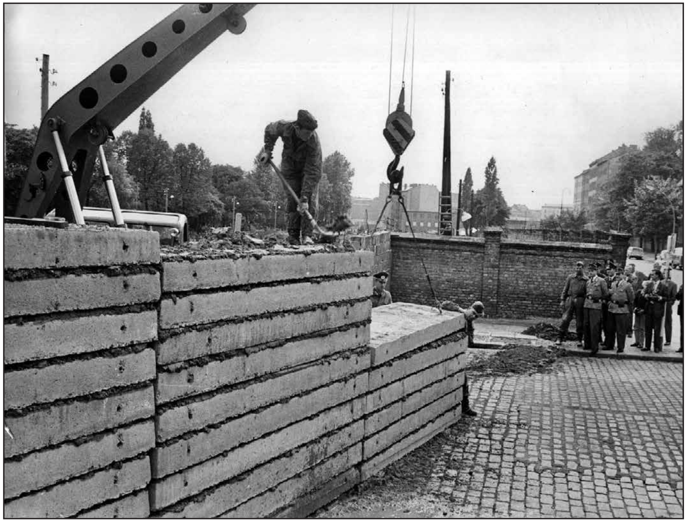
The convoy boosted the US West Berlin garrison to 6,500, while the British had 4,000 and the French 3,000, a total of 13,500 men. This was, of course, dwarfed by vastly superior numbers of Warsaw Pact forces. The East Germans could muster 110,000 *NVA* troops, 78,000 *Vopos*, 45,000 *Grepos*, 30,000 Police Reserves and 300,000 *KdA*, plus the full weight of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG). The Allied forces in Berlin were there as a flag-flying exercise and nothing more than a



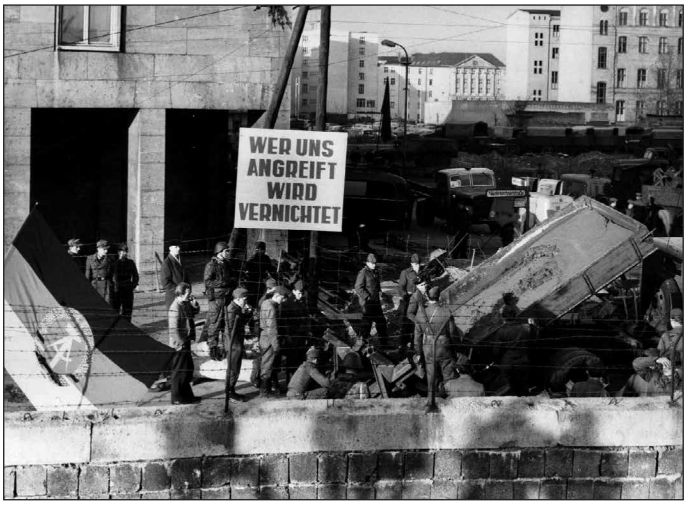
Breeze block construction near Heinrich-Heine-Straße – note the *Vopo* looking over the Wall, October 1961. (US National Archives)



Contemporary composite image illustrating the different first generation Wall construction types at Reinickendorfer Straße in the district of Wedding. (US National Archives)

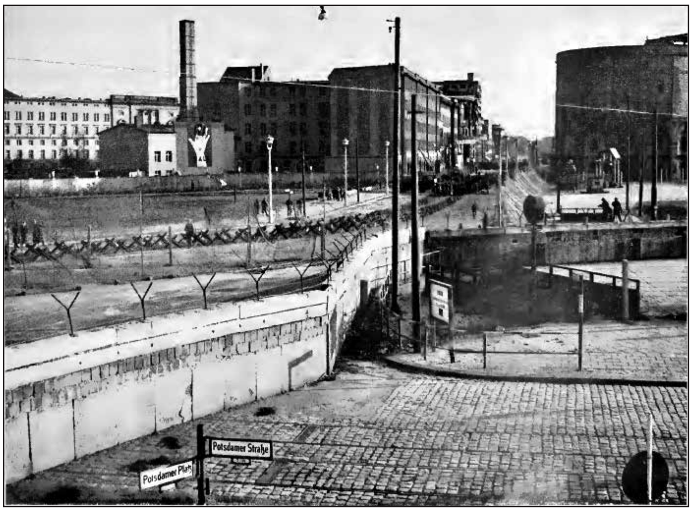


Reinforced Wall made from horizontally laid concrete slabs, the same slabs were used for the patrol roads along the IGB, 21 August 1961. (US National Archives)

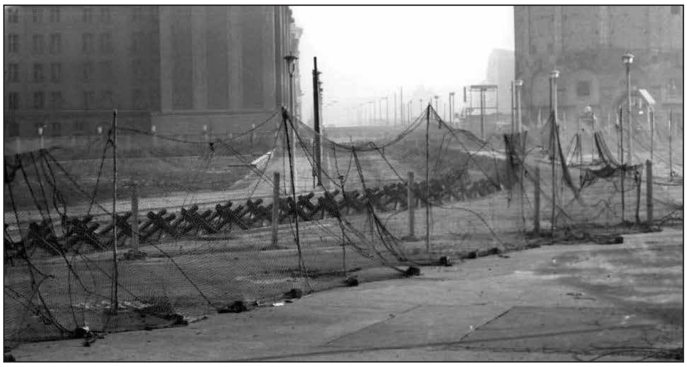


A work party concretes hedgehog vehicle obstacles into position at Niederkirchnerstraße, near Checkpoint Charlie. The banner says, 'Whoever Attacks Us Will Be Destroyed'. (US National Archives) 'tripwire' to delay the inevitable, should the Warsaw Pact decide to invade the capitalist enclave.

General Clay remained in the city, becoming Kennedy's eyes and ears in Berlin, reporting directly to the president. Operating outside the military command structure and empowered by his presidential mission and his hero-like reputation amongst Berliners, he was to rub many of his Berlin Garrison colleagues up the wrong way. With less pomp, the British garrison was also reinforced but the combined Allied strength was still dwarfed by the East German and Soviet forces that surrounded them. Clay and LBJ's visit, and the troop reinforcements were huge psychological and propaganda successes, having a far greater symbolic impact than anything political or military.



The early fortifications at Potsdamer Platz. The slab, block and lintel Wall is topped with barbed wire on Y outriggers. Behind this is anti-personnel netting secured on posts, hedgehog anti-vehicle obstacles, a patrol road, high-intensity lighting, a section of no-man's land and then an inner (hinterland) Wall. (Federal Ministry for All-German Questions of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany)

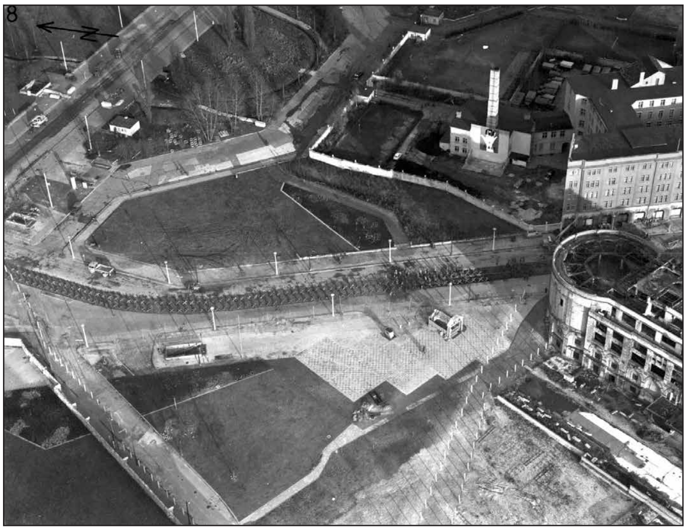


Anti-personnel netting, similar to that in the previous image, seen in more detail. (US National Archives)

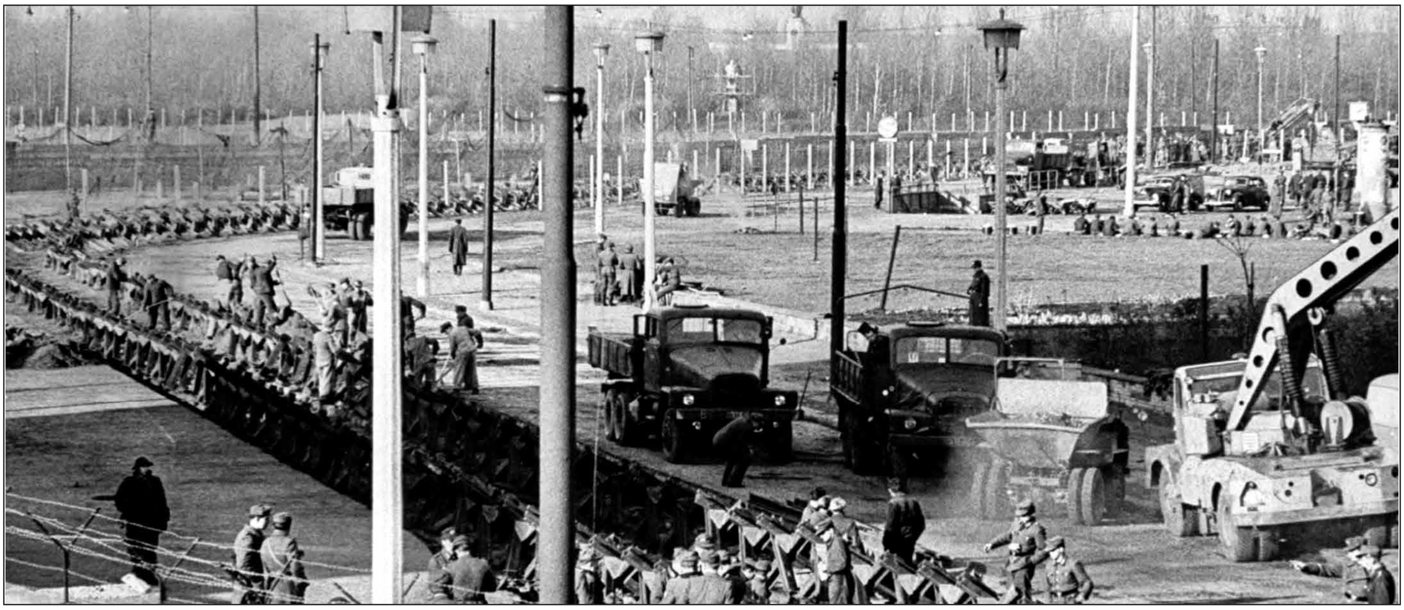
Bricking Up

On the afternoon of Tuesday 15 August, while the citizens of Berlin observed from a distance, the Western military garrisons waited for orders and the world slowly reacted, the East German construction brigades moved in with their cranes, trucks and concrete mixers the construction teams began replacing the barbed wire with something more permanent, watched over by *NVA* soldiers, *Grenztruppen* and *Stasi* agents, the latter often in military uniform.

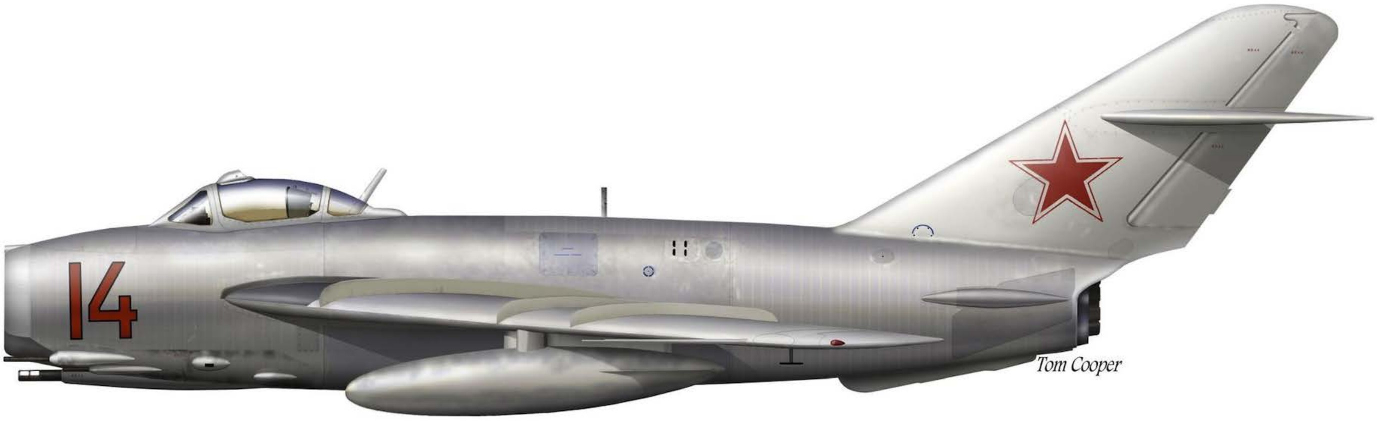
The first Berlin Wall was a rough and ready construction of various materials: large concrete slabs normally used for building apartment blocks, breeze blocks and concrete lintels, plus lots of barbed wire. Some lengths of Wall were made from just crudely laid breeze blocks and topped off with barbed wire. They often used concrete lintels to 'tie' the blocks together, although without



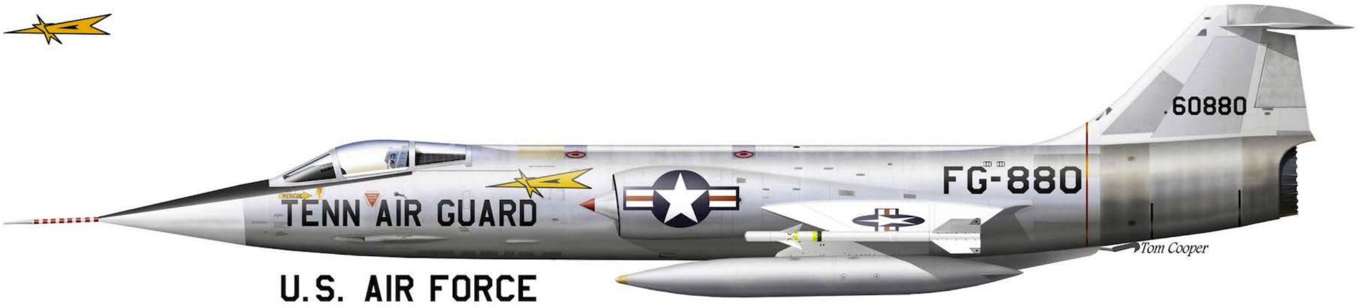
An aerial view showing the extent of the Potsdamer Platz border fortifications. 22 November 1961. (US National Archives)



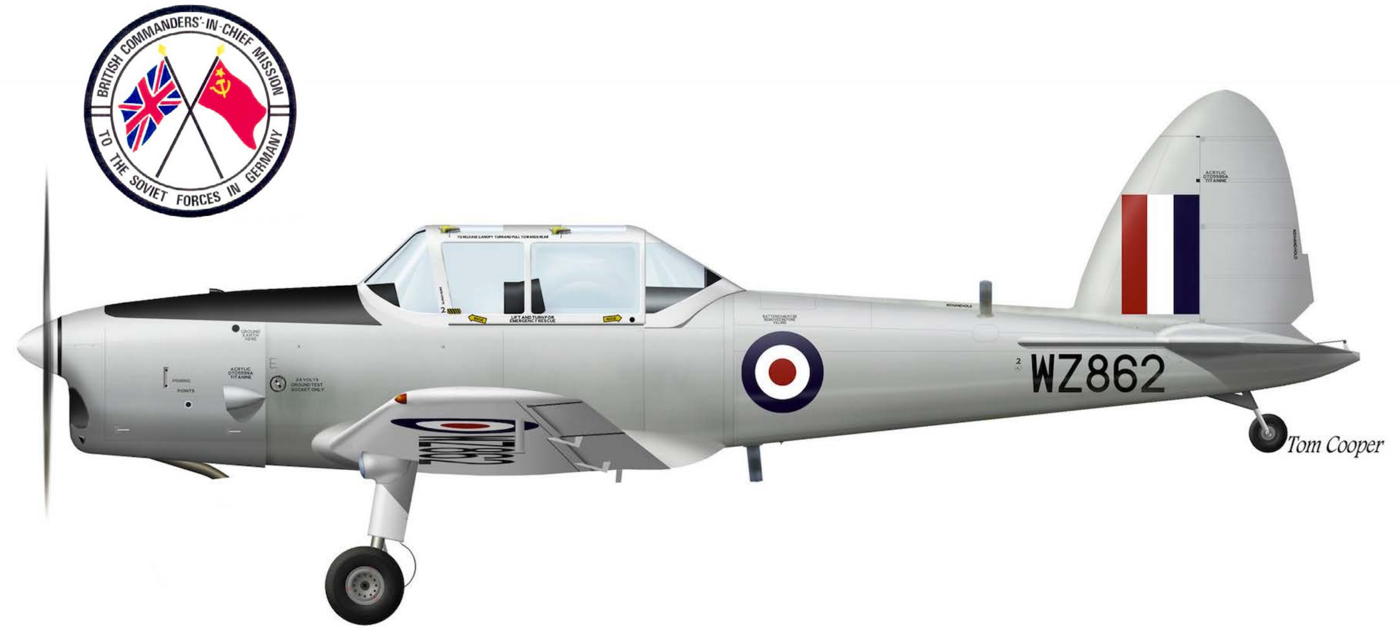
A large installation of hedgehog anti-vehicle obstacles at Potsdamer Platz as part of the first generation border fortifications. (Albert Grandolini)



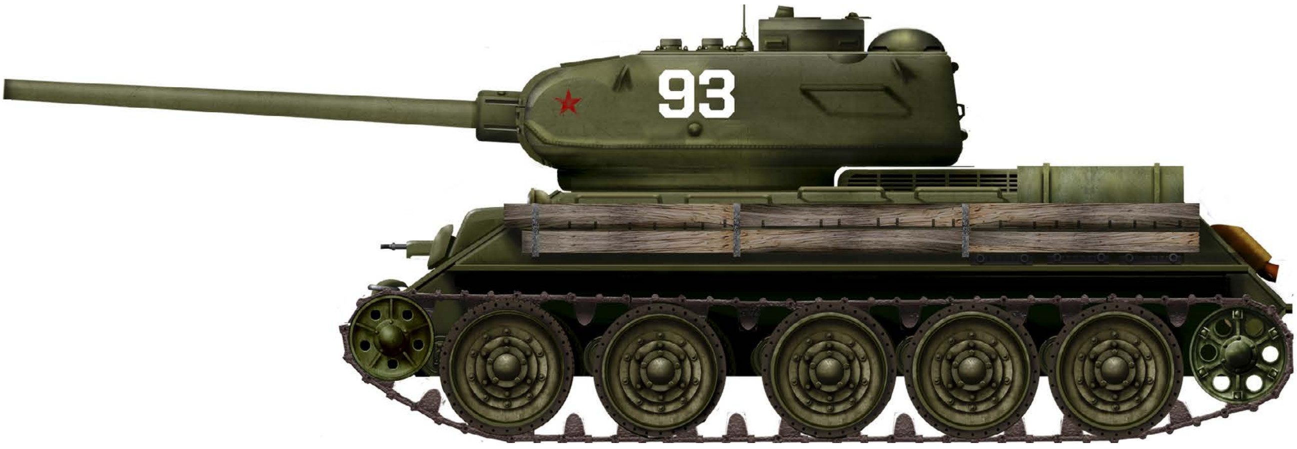
A MiG-17F (NATO designation Fresco-C) of the 19 GvIAP (*Gvardeiskii Istrebitelnii Aviatsionnii Polk*, Guards Fighter Air Regiment) based at Lärz Air Base, 100km north north-east of Berlin. 19 GvIAP flew MiG-17Fs from 1953 to 1962 when they transitioned to Su-7Bs (NATO designation Fitter-A). Lärz is located next to the northern air corridor between the West Germany and West Berlin, and MiG-17F pilots would have had daily encounters with Western military and civil aircraft (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



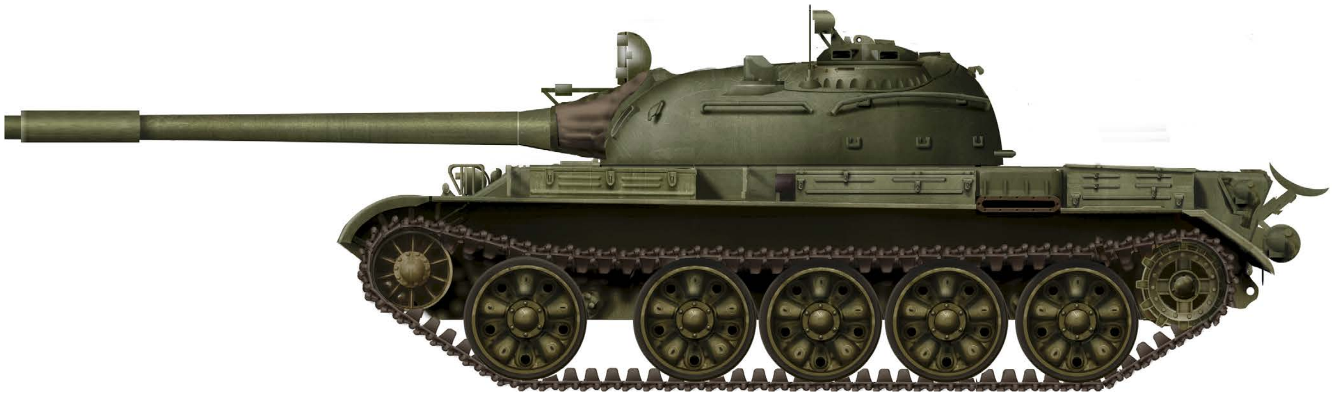
Lockheed F-104A Starfighter from the Tennessee Air National Guard 151st Fighter-Interceptor Group, based at McGhee-Tyson AFB, Tennessee, deployed to Ramstein AB in Germany November 1961. In response to the Berlin crisis, President Kennedy mobilised 148,000 National Guardsmen and Reservists, with some units being deployed to Europe. Front-line USAF units were upgrading to the F-104C, handing their F-104As to National Guard units. The stubby-winged F-104A Starfighter, nicknamed 'the Zipper' because of its blistering Mach 2 performance, had a short range and no air-to-air refuelling capability. As a result the USAF had to disassemble the airframes and fly them over to Europe in Douglas C-124 Globemaster II transport aircraft. While deployed, the "TENN AIR GUARD" markings were replaced with "U.S. AIR FORCE" to avoid any confusion amongst Allied aircrew. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)


BRITISH COMMANDERS'-IN-CHIEF MISSION TO THE SOVIET FORCES IN GERMANY
WZ862
Tom Cooper

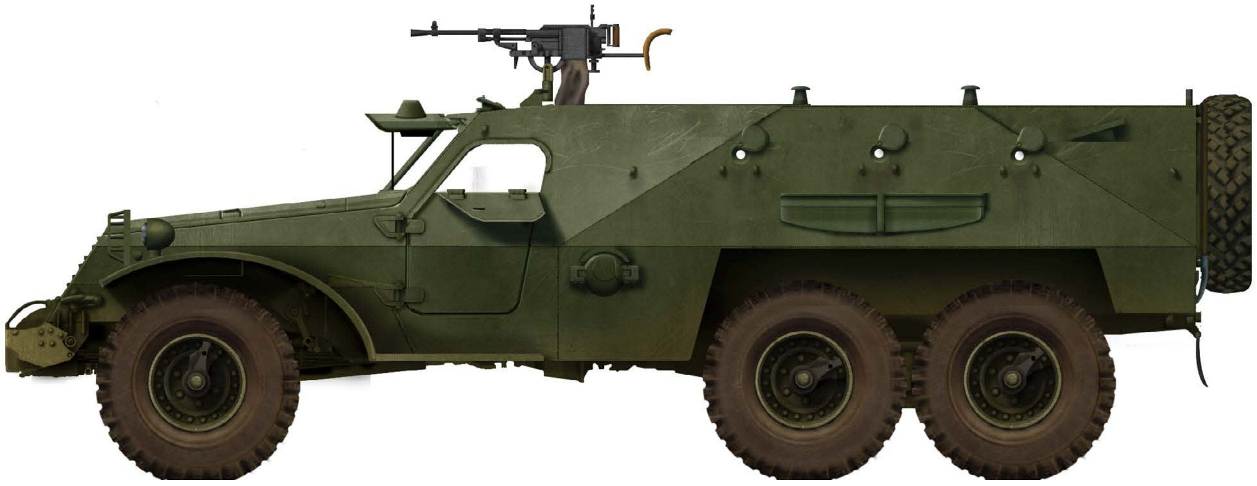
RAF de Havilland Canada DHC-1 Chipmunk T.10 WZ862 was operated by BRIXMIS out of RAF Gatow, West Berlin. The Chipmunk was operated by RAF personnel assigned to 'The British Commander-in-Chief's Mission to the Soviet Forces of Occupation in Germany' (BRIXMIS) under Operation Oberon, flying around the Berlin Control Zone spying on Soviet bases and troop movements. On the morning of 13 August 1963, BRIXMIS Chipmunks were some of the first to report the extent of the border closure. Throughout the life of the Berlin Wall, they photographed every metre of it on their regular reconnaissance sorties. BRIXMIS operated Chipmunks from 1956 to 1990. WG862 was the third of the type used by the unit, operating from December 1974 to June 1987. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



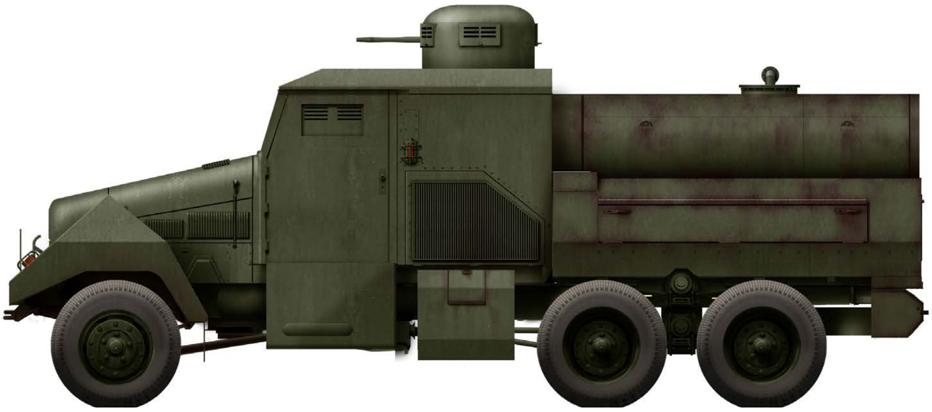
A Soviet T-34/85 medium tank, deployed in East Berlin to put down the June 1953 workers' uprising. The T-34/85 was an evolution from the T-34/76 based on lessons learnt during the first half of the Second World War. It had a powerful long-barrelled ZiS-S-53 85mm main gun and 2 machine guns, which was more than enough firepower to suppress the unarmed civilian demonstrators. As many as 80,000 T-34s across all its variants were produced and all subsequent Cold War Soviet MBT designs would trace their lineage back to it. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



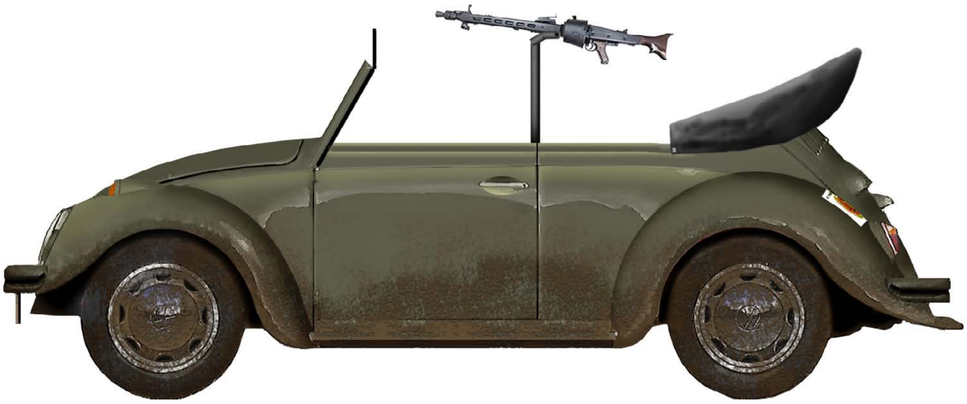
Soviet T-55 main battle tank deployed at the Checkpoint Charlie incident in October 1961. On 27 October 1961, ten T-55s were deployed on the East German side of Checkpoint Charlie, facing American M48A1 tanks at point-blank range. In a futile attempt at deniability, the Soviet markings were painted out and the crews wore plain black overalls, however, their identity was never in much doubt. Armed with a 100mm rifled main gun, a 7.62mm coaxial machine gun, and NBC protection, the T-55 was a formidable weapon of war. The T-55 was a development of the T-54 and entered service with the Soviet army in 1958 and is still in service with many militaries around the world today. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



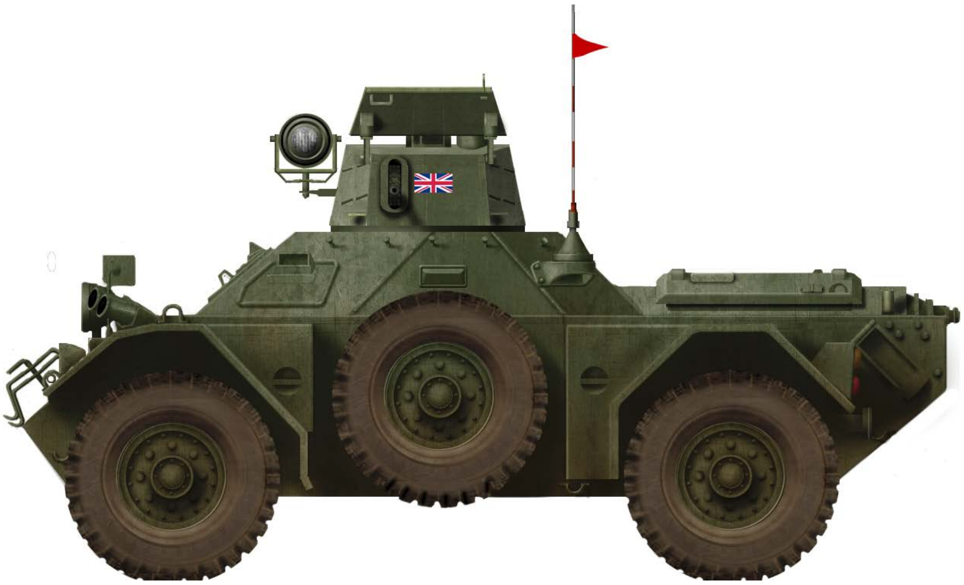
The BTR-152 was a six wheeled Soviet-made armoured personnel carrier, entering service in 1950. Known in the DDR as a SPW-152 (*Schützenpanzerwagen*), it had a crew of two, a commander and driver, and up to 17 passengers in the open-topped rear cargo compartment. The main armament was a 7.62-mm SGMB (a modernized SG-43 Goryunov) machine gun pintel-mounted above the crew compartment, although soldiers could fire over the sides or through the small firing ports on the side. The armour provided a degree of protection from small arms fire and shrapnel, and there were fold down shields to protect the cab occupants, but passengers in the rear compartment were very vulnerable to attack from above, as the Soviets discovered to their cost during the 1956 Hungarian invasion where protesters dropped Molotov cocktails into the rear. The driver could also open and close the radiator grill from inside to protect the engine. These vehicles were used extensively by the *NVA*, *Vopos* and *Grenztruppen*. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



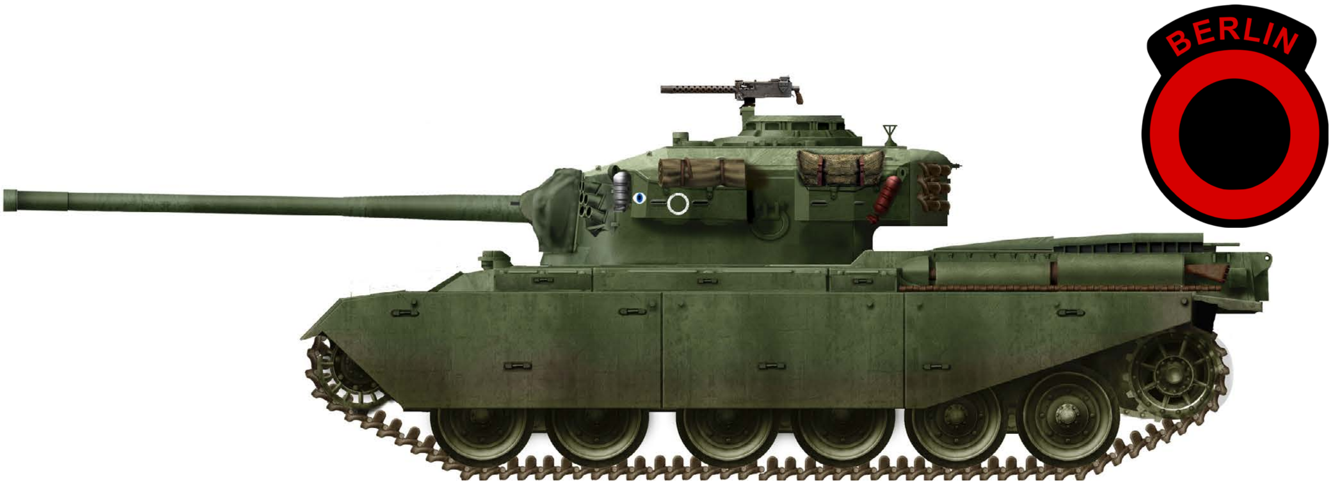
East German *Wasserwerfer SK-2* water cannon, as deployed at the Brandenburg Gate on 13 August 1961. Operated by the *Vopos*, the *KdA* and the *VPB* riot police, it was officially known as the *Sonderkraftfahrzeug 2* (Special Motor Vehicle 2, SK-2) and colloquially as the *Arbeiterwaschmaschin* (the 'Workers' Washing Machine') because of its frequent use to disperse crowds of demonstrators. It was based on the DDR-Lkw G5 truck, but extensively modified for the role with a 4,000l water tank. All the windows were protected by fold down grills and the turret was fitted with a searchlight. The cannon had an effective range of about 20m. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



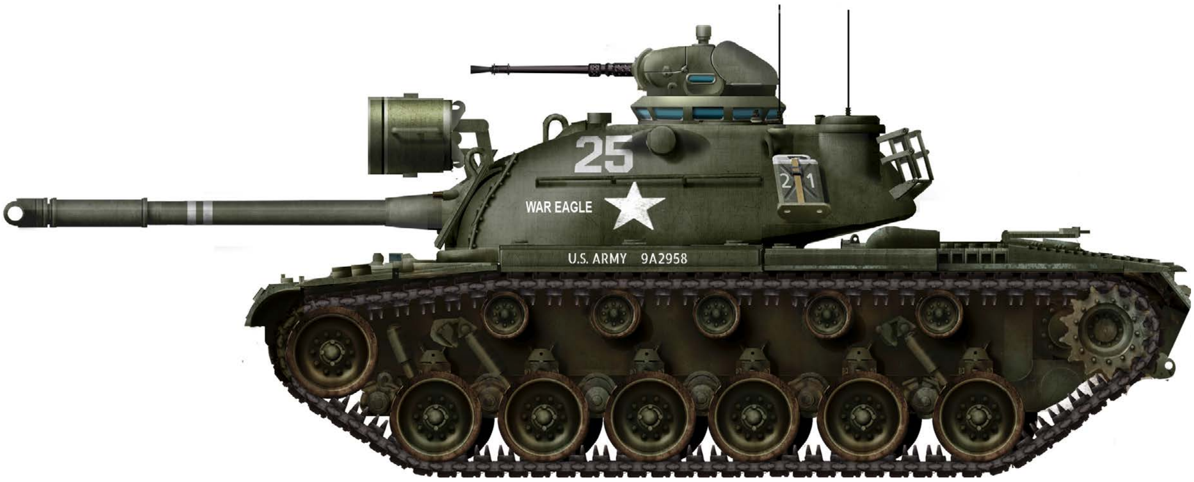
A 1952 Volkswagen Karmann Cabriolet of the West German Border Guard. The *Volkswagen* (or people's car) was designed by Ferdinand Porsche and launched in 1938, but its development was curtailed by the war, when production went over to the military *Kubelwagen* (bucket car). After the war, the factory was taken over by the British occupation forces who began production again, initially producing Volkswagens for use by the British military administration and later for domestic and export customers, where it was known as the 'Beetle' or 'Bug'. The factory was handed over to the Federal Government on 8 October 1949. As well as being used by the British Army in Germany and West Berlin, the vehicle was also used by the West German authorities, such as the *Bundesgrenzschutz* (the West German Federal Border Guard or *BGS*), converted in its cabriolet format to take an MG42 machine gun mounted on a pole, and a radio on the back seat. With a crew of three, a driver, a gunner, and a radio operator, they would patrol on the West side of the Inner German Border. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



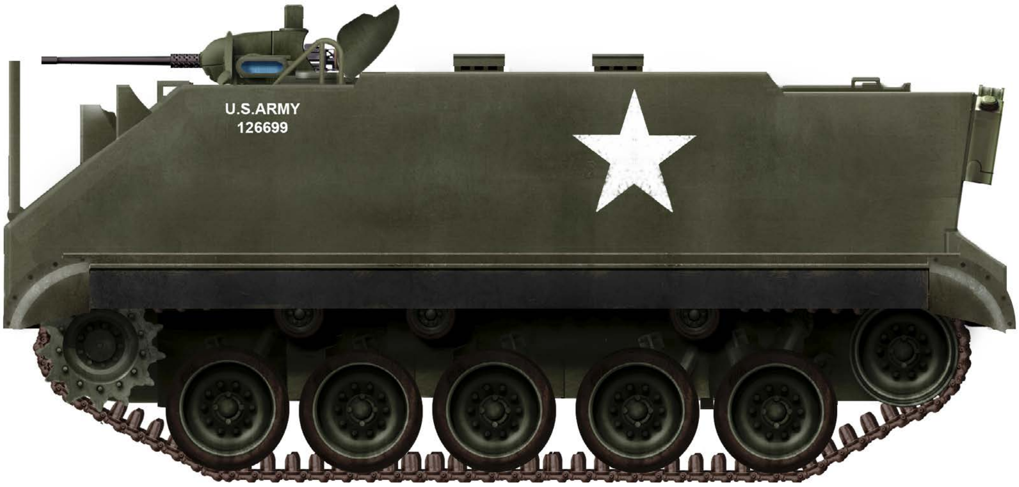
British Army Daimler Ferret Mk 2/3 armoured scout Car, 1961. Officially known as the 'Scout Car Reconnaissance Mk 2/3 (Daimler Ferret 4×4) FV701(H)', the Ferret entered service in 1952, primarily as a reconnaissance and liaison vehicle. It was powered by a 129 brake horsepower Rolls Royce B60 Mk 6A 4.2 litre straight-six engine and could reach a top speed on the road of 58mph (93km/h). The Ferret was armed with a turret-mounted Browning .30 cal. (7.62mm) machine gun and the 2 or 3 man crew would have been issued with Sterling SMGs for personal defence. Additionally, six smoke grenade dischargers could be electrically fired from within the vehicle. The Ferret was used for patrolling around West Berlin and along the Inner German Border. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



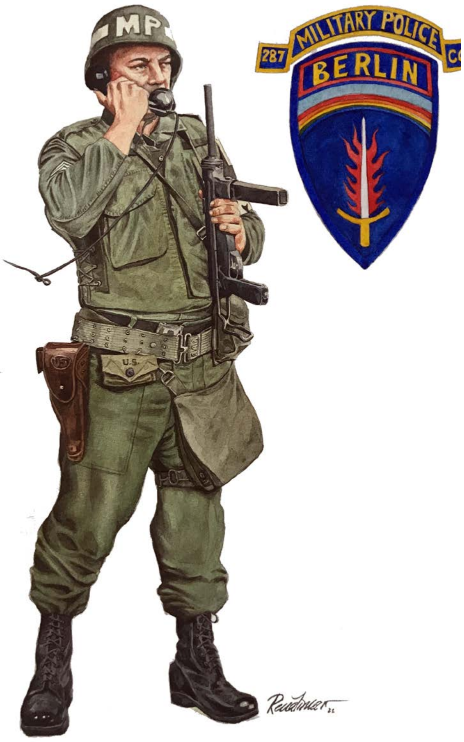
A British Army Centurion Mk 5 main battle tank of 'C' Sqn, 4th Royal Tank Regiment based at Smuts Barracks in West Berlin as part of the British Army's Berlin Infantry Brigade. They were deployed to Tiergarten in reserve during the October 1961 confrontation at Checkpoint Charlie. The Centurion first entered service in 1945 and served with distinction in Korea. Weighing in at 49.52 tons, with a top speed of 21.5mph and a crew of 4, the Centurion was a formidable and battle-proven fighting machine. Its main armament was a 20-Pounder (83.4 mm) QFSA Gun fitted with a fully automatic stabilization system, supplemented by a 7.92mm Besa coaxial machine gun and a 7.62mm Browning machine gun on the cupola (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



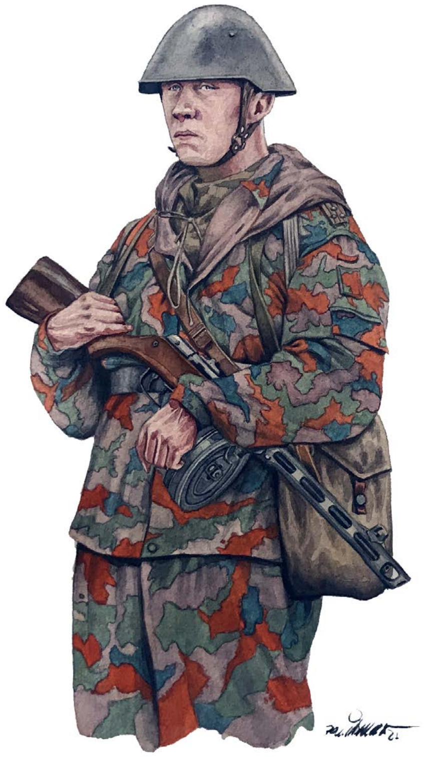
A US Army M48A1 main battle tank as deployed during the Checkpoint Charlie confrontation in October 1961. Introduced in 1955, the M48A1 featured the M1 commander's cupola giving him all-round vision when 'buttoned up' and a rear hinged section to allow him to stand up outside the turret. The tank's main armament was the M41 (T139) 90mm gun with a distinctive 'T' shaped blast deflector at the end of the barrel. Mounted to the left of the barrel was a .30 cal. (7.62mm) M73 coaxial machine gun and above it was a large xenon searchlight. This could emit infra-red light or a dazzling 1 million candle-power's worth of white light. In addition, there was a .50 cal. (12.7mm) Browning M2 HB machine gun on the cupola, which could be loaded and fired from within. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



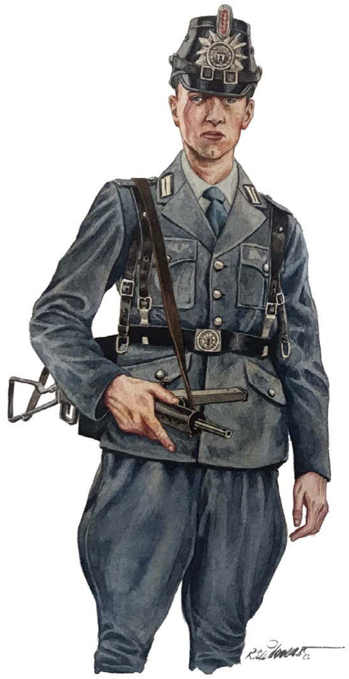
US Army M59 Armoured Personnel Carrier as deployed at the Checkpoint Charlie confrontation of October 1961. The M59 entered service in spring of 1954, gradually replacing the M75. It had a crew of 2, a commander and a driver, and could carry 10 fully equipped soldiers, with a top road speed of 32mph (51km/h). Its main armament was .50 cal. machine gun mounted in an M13 cupola. The M59 was widely used during the Vietnam War before being succeeded by the M113. They were often seen in Berlin with the mudguards/sideskirts folded up against the side of the hull, though are shown here in the more usual position. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



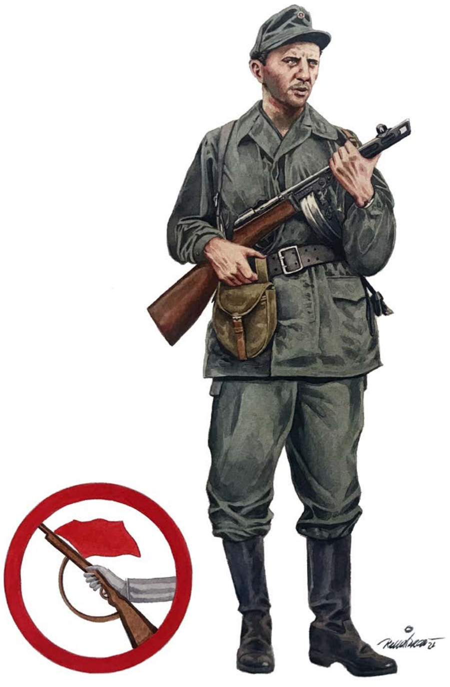
US Army Military Police Sergeant of the 287th Military Police Company (Separate), Checkpoint Charlie, 1961. When normal diplomatic vehicular movement was interrupted in October 1961 in contravention of the Potsdam protocols, the US Military Police were called in to escort an American diplomat's car across Checkpoint Charlie into East Berlin. The situation developed into a tense standoff between American and Soviet tanks. This soldier is carrying an M3A1 submachine gun and is wearing a flak jacket. Attached to his belt is his M1911 service pistol and gas mask pouch. (Artwork by Renato Dalmaso)



A soldier from the *Landstreitkräfte der NVA*, the East German Army. He is wearing the distinctive M56 *Stahlhelm* helmet and a combat suit in the four colour *Flächentarn* leaf camouflage pattern. He is carrying a PPSh-41 submachine gun and has a gas mask in a bag slung over his shoulder. *NVA* soldiers were deployed on 13 August 1961 at sensitive locations such as the Friedrichstraße crossing point to deter trouble from both the East Berlin population and the Western military forces. (Artwork by Renato Dalmaso)



A West Berlin police officer, as seen patrolling the streets as the Wall was being erected and in subsequent confrontations. He is carrying a Second World War-vintage British Mk II Sten submachine gun and wearing Second World War *Wehrmacht* style harness and the distinctive *Tschako* or *Schako* helmet, a design that dates back to Napoleonic times. They would transition to conventional peaked caps during 1963. West Berlin police officers would engage in regular tear gas exchanges with East Berlin *Vopos* or *Grenztruppen* and would occasionally exchange fire if fired upon, often during an escape attempt, 1961. (Artwork by Renato Dalmaso)



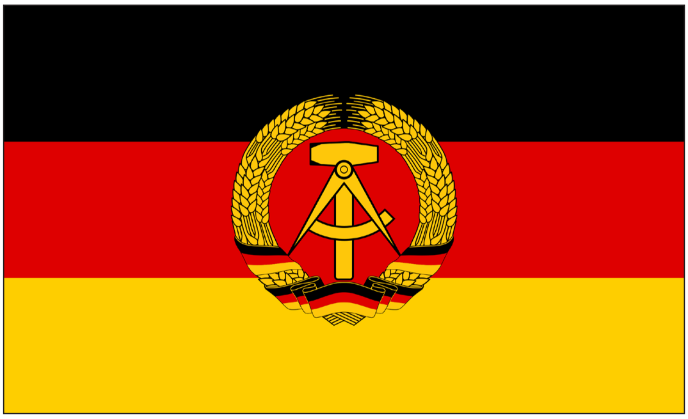
A militiaman from the *Kampfgruppen der Arbeiterklasse* (the Combat Groups of the Working Class or *KdA*), the East German volunteer factory militia. The *KdA* had a major role to play on *Stacheldrahtsonntag* as long lines of troopers were used to line the route of the border before the barbed wire went down and were most visible at the Brandenburg Gate. They were also used to disperse demonstrators. This volunteer is wearing dark green fatigues, the distinctive soft cap and is carrying a PPSh-41 submachine gun, with an additional ammunition drum in a pouch hanging on his belt. Most of the guns were not loaded during the operation for fear of starting an international incident. (Artwork by Renato Dalmaso)

JFK looks over the Berlin Wall at Checkpoint Charlie, 26 June 1963. (US National Archives)

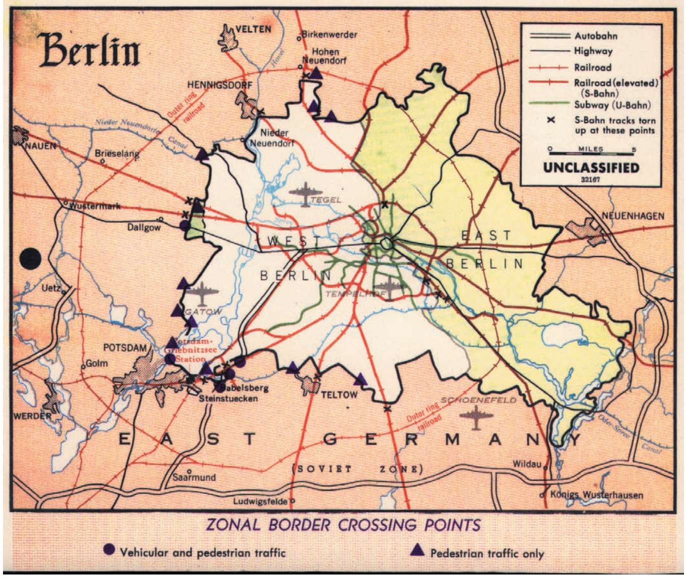
JFK making his famous '*Ich bin ein Berliner*' speech, Schöneberg Town Hall, 26 June 1963. (Albert Grandolini)

JFK looking over the Wall to see the Brandenburg Gate, 26 June 1963. (US National Archives)

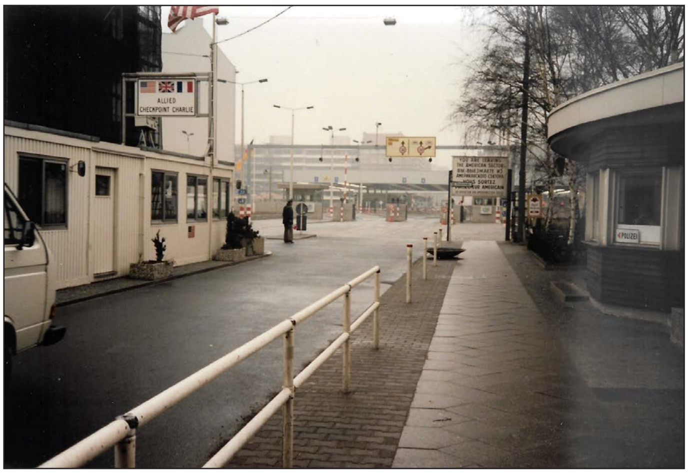
JFK speaks at the Free University in Berlin, 26 June 1963. (JFK Library)



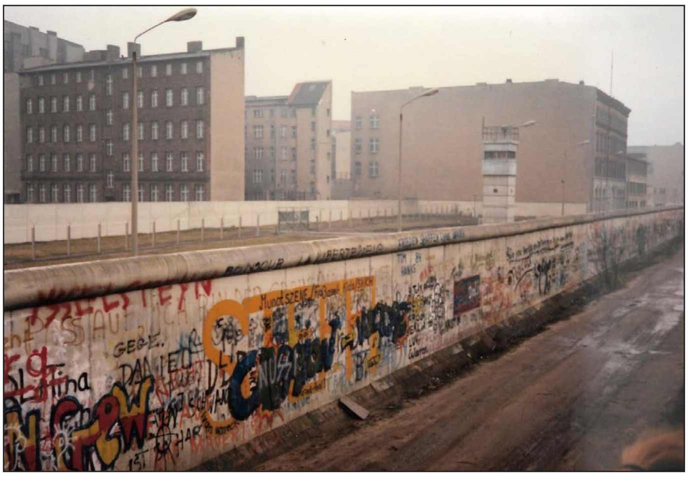
The state flag of the German Democratic Republic from 1959 to 1990. (Public Domain)


Berlin
VELTEN
Birkenwerder
Hohen Neuendorf
HENNIGSDORF
Outer ring railroad
Nieder Neuendorfer Canal
Nieder Neuendorf
NAUEN
Brieselang
Wustermark
Dallgow
TEGEL
WEST BERLIN
EAST BERLIN
NEUENHAGEN
Uetz
GATOW
TEMPELHOF
POTSDAM
Potsdam-Griebnitzsee Station
Golm
Babelsberg
Steinstuecken
TELTOW
SCHOENEFELD
WERDER
EAST GERMANY
(SOVIET ZONE)
Saarmund
Ludwigsfelde
Wildau
Königs Wusterhausen
Oder-Spree Canal
Autobahn
Highway
Railroad
Railroad (elevated) (S-Bahn)
Subway (U-Bahn)
S-Bahn tracks torn up at these points
MILES
UNCLASSIFIED
32167
ZONAL BORDER CROSSING POINTS
● Vehicular and pedestrian traffic
▲ Pedestrian traffic only

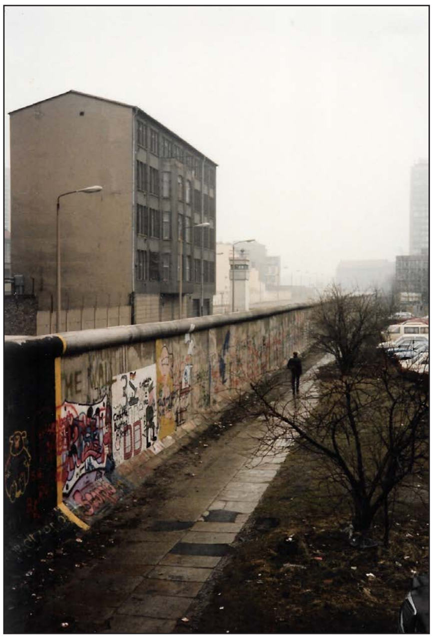
CIA Map of Berlin, showing the Zonal border crossing points in the 1960s. (CIA)



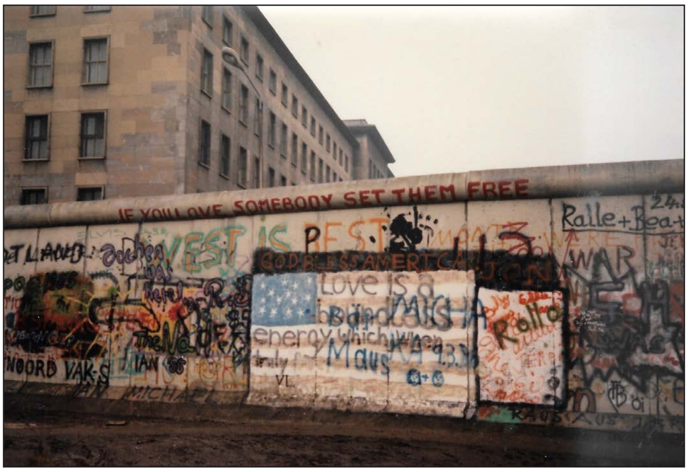
The American side of Checkpoint Charlie, April 1986. (Author)



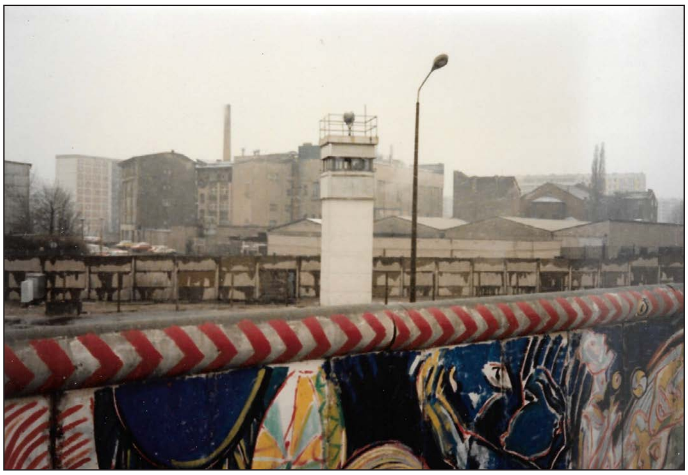
Section of the *Schutzstreifen* (Security or Protective Strip, 'Death Strip' or *Todesstreifen*) taken from the observation platform next to Checkpoint Charlie in April 1986. It shows the border fortifications clearly – from West to East: *Grenzwall 75*, high intensity floodlights, BT-9 watchtower, Signal Fence (*Signalzaun*) with access gate and Inner (Hinterland) Wall. Hidden from view are the Patrol Road, Control Strip and any other defences. The buildings on the other side are unoccupied apart from covert observation points. (Author)



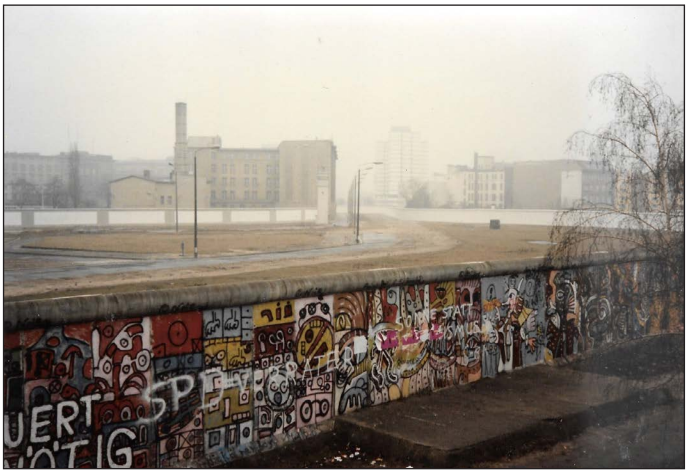
View from the observation platform at Checkpoint Charlie looking East over the Berlin Wall, constructed from *Grenzwall 75*, with a BT-9 watchtower in the background, April 1986. (Author)



Close up of graffiti on *Grenzwall 75* on what remains of Zimmerstraße adjacent to Checkpoint Charlie, April 1986. (Author)

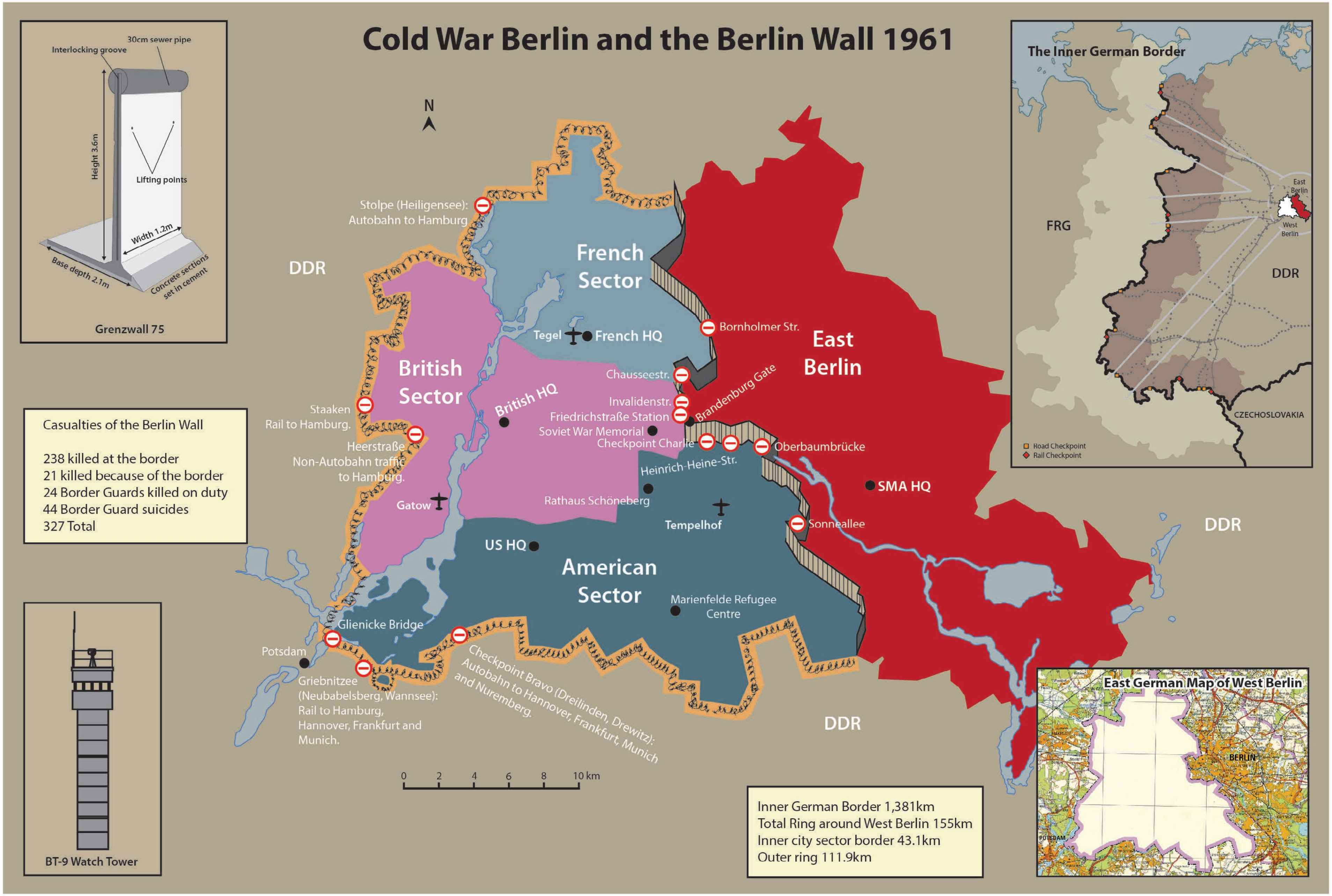


View of Berlin Wall taken from observation platform close to Potsdamer Platz, with BT-9 watchtower, high intensity floodlight, Signal Fence and inner (hinterland) wall, April 1986. (Author)



View over Potsdamer Platz from an observation platform, with *Grenzwall 75*, high intensity floodlights, patrol road, Control Strip, and BT-9 watchtower. The inner (hinterland) wall appears to be non-standard, April 1986. (Author)

Cold War Berlin and the Berlin Wall 1961

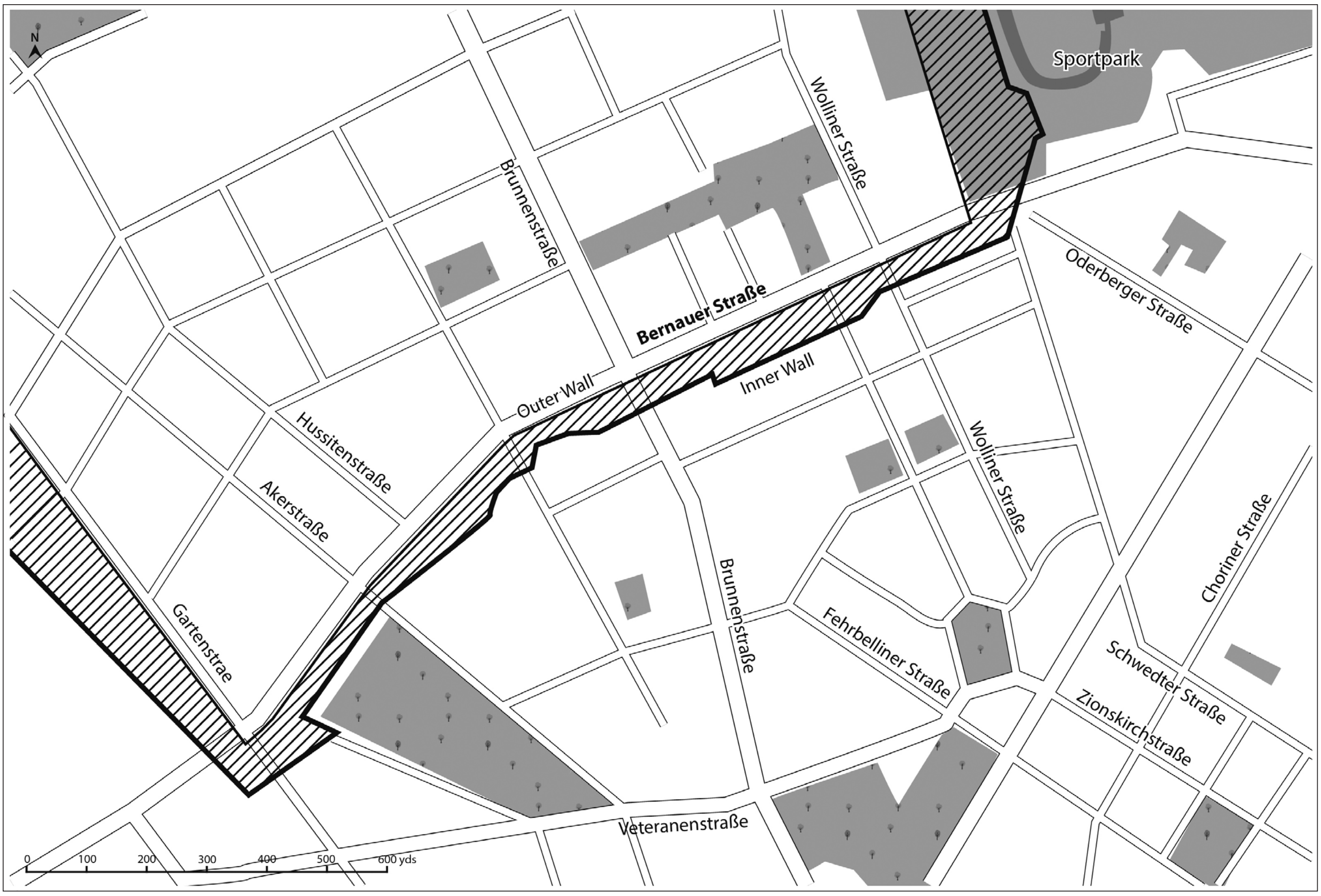

Interlocking groove
30cm sewer pipe
Height 3.6m
Lifting points
Width 1.2m
Base depth 2.1m
Concrete sections set in cement
Grenzwall 75
N
DDR
Stolpe (Heiligensee):
Autobahn to Hamburg
French Sector
Tegel
French HQ
Bornholmer Str.
East Berlin
British Sector
Chausseestr.
British HQ
Invalidenstr.
Friedrichstraße Station
Brandenburg Gate
Soviet War Memorial
Checkpoint Charlie
Oberbaumbrücke
Staaken
Rail to Hamburg.
Heerstraße
Non-Autobahn traffic to Hamburg.
Heinrich-Heine-Str.
SMA HQ
Gatow
Rathaus Schöneberg
Tempelhof
Sonnenallee
US HQ
American Sector
Marienfelde Refugee Centre
DDR
Glienicke Bridge
Potsdam
Griebnitzee (Neubabelsberg, Wannsee):
Rail to Hamburg,
Hannover, Frankfurt and
Munich.
Checkpoint Bravo (Dreilinden, Drewitz):
Autobahn to Hannover, Frankfurt, Munich
and Nuremberg.
DDR
0
2
4
6
8
10 km
BT-9 Watch Tower
The Inner German Border
FRG
DDR
East Berlin
West Berlin
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Road Checkpoint
Rail Checkpoint
East German Map of West Berlin
BERLIN
POTSDAM

Casualties of the Berlin Wall

238 killed at the border
21 killed because of the border
24 Border Guards killed on duty
44 Border Guard suicides
327 Total

Inner German Border 1,381km
Total Ring around West Berlin 155km
Inner city sector border 43.1km
Outer ring 111.9km

(Map by George Anderson)

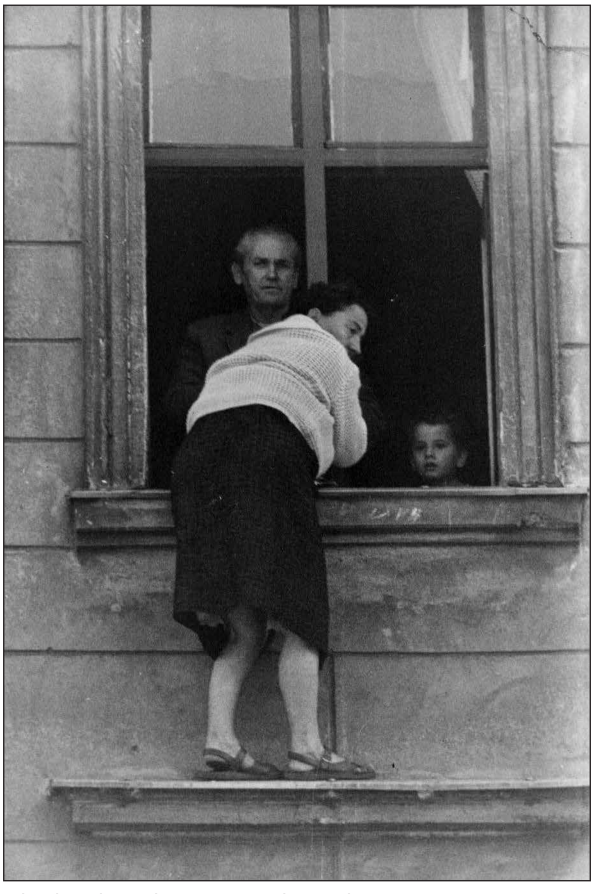

N
Sportpark
Wolliner Straße
Brunnenstraße
Bernauer Straße
Oderberger Straße
Outer Wall
Inner Wall
Hussitenstraße
Akerstraße
Gartenstrae
Wolliner Straße
Choriner Straße
Brunnenstraße
Fehrbelliner Straße
Schwedter Straße
Zionskirchstraße
Veteranenstraße
0
100
200
300
400
500
600 yds

Bernauer Straße. (George Anderson)

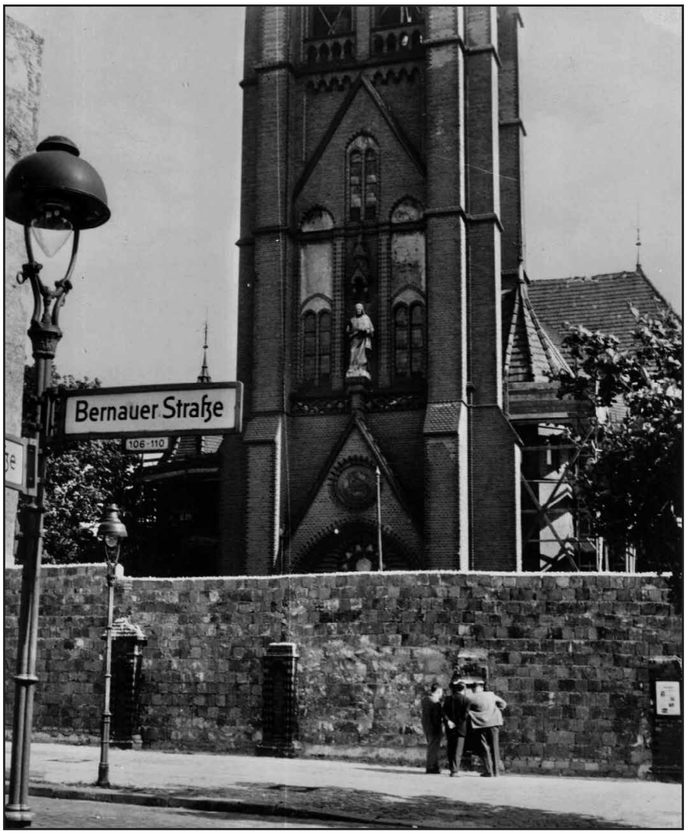
An elderly couple look down from their upper storey window on Bernauer Straße in East Berlin, to the street below, which is in West Berlin. (US National Archives)

proper foundations, the structure was quite weak and could be pushed over with a little force. Other sections were reinforced with laid horizontally slabs and 'hedgehog' anti-vehicle obstacles. The resulting mix was crude, and the workmanship was poor, but it created a formidable and forbidding barrier.

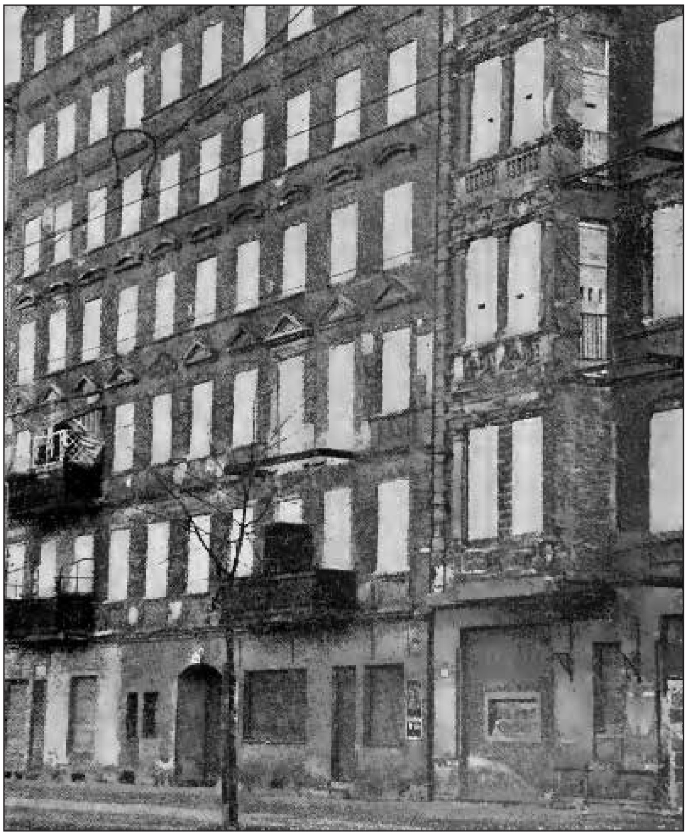
The work continued round-the-clock, illuminated by floodlights. Where Western photographers were present, the *SED* placed large banners to aggressively push their point of view. By 22 August, just nine days after he closed the border, Ulbricht was confident that the Western Allies were not going to intervene and ordered the physical Wall construction to begin all around West Berlin.



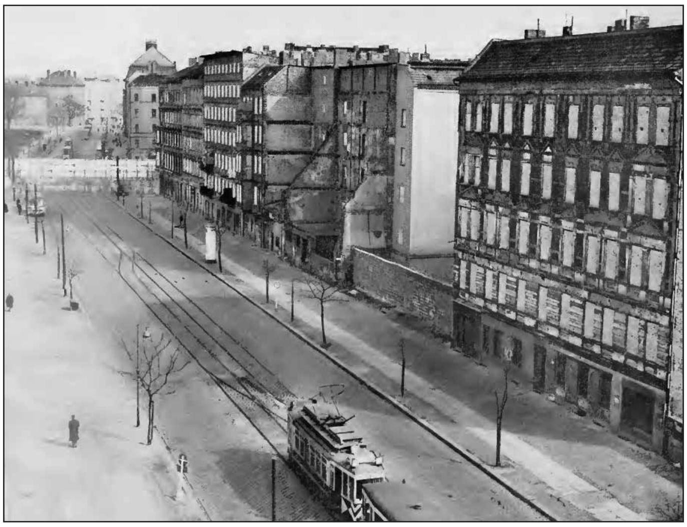
As her husband watches, Margarethe Finder prepares to escape East Germany by jumping across the border into a net held by West Berliners, 7 October, 1961. (CIA)



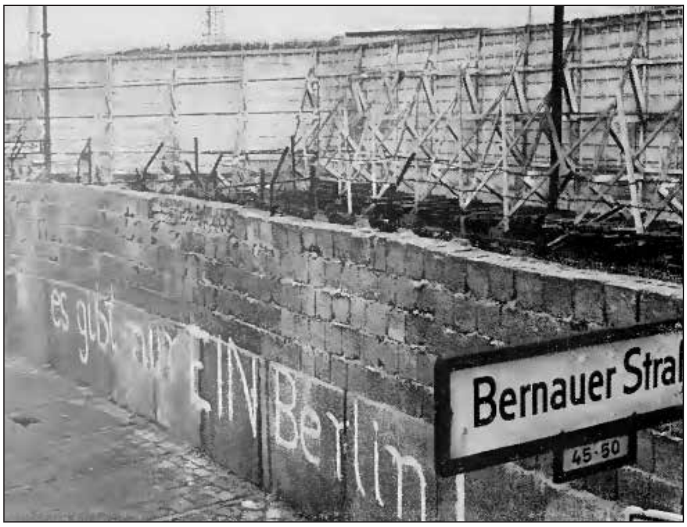
The Berlin Wall along Bernauer Straße blocked the entrance to a church in East Berlin, symbolically reminding West Berliners of communist opposition to religion. (US National Archives)



Tenement blocks with bricked up windows in Bernauer Straße. (Federal Ministry for All-German Questions of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany)



The east end of Bernauer Strasse. The houses with the bricked-up windows on the right side of the street are in the Soviet sector; both pavements and the roadway belong to West Berlin. (Federal Ministry for All-German Questions of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany)

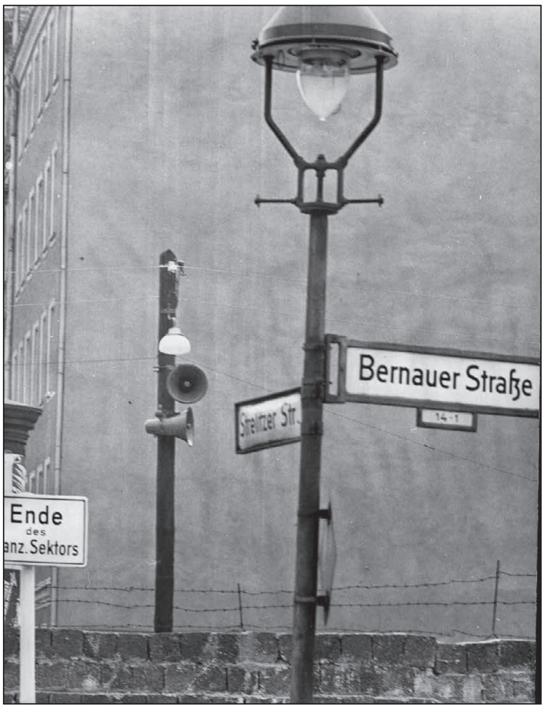


Wall and hoardings at the east end of Bernauer Straße. The graffiti reads '*Es gibt ein Berlin*' – '*There is one Berlin*'. (Federal Ministry for All-German Questions of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany)

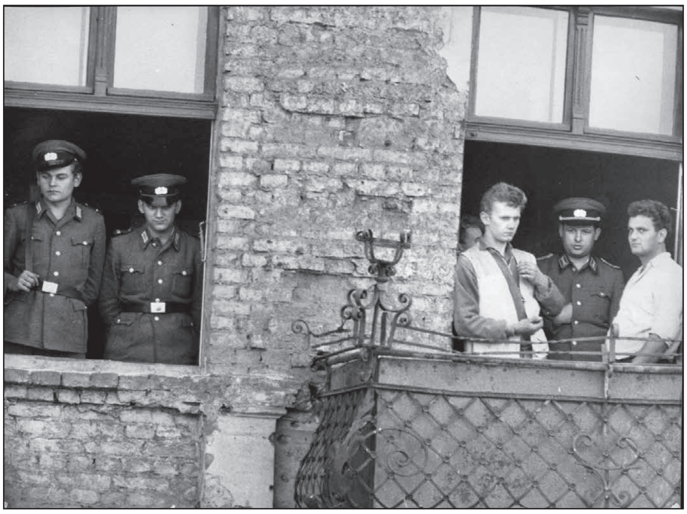
The vast majority of the Berlin Wall ran along normal streets, as dictated by the old Berlin borough map, but in a few key locations the topography (or strategic significance) dictated some special treatment. Three of these places became highly representative of the ugliness of the Berlin Wall: Potsdamer Platz, Bernauer Straße and the Brandenburg Gate.

Potsdamer Platz

The platz (square) gets its name from the Potsdamer Tor, the gate that stood on the main road from Berlin to Potsdam since the 18th century. The square's heyday was the early 20th century, when it was bustling with life and roaring traffic, and in 1924, the home to the first traffic lights in continental Europe, with similar significance to London's Piccadilly Circus or New York's Times Square. The cultural elite met in the cafés and restaurants around the square. It was devastated during the Second World War, and as the new Cold War emerged, it gained extra significance as the point where the British, American and Soviet Sectors of Occupation met. On the morning of 13 August 1961, the square was the first place in Berlin to have concrete posts installed for barbed wire and a host of other defences were installed over the coming weeks to secure this strategically important position.



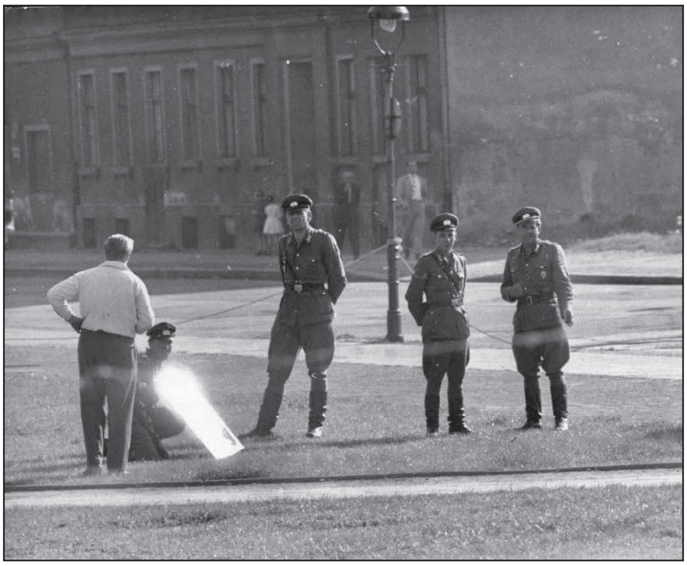
Bernauer Straße – large loudspeakers have been installed to broadcast East German propaganda, 25 October 1961. (Albert Grandolini)



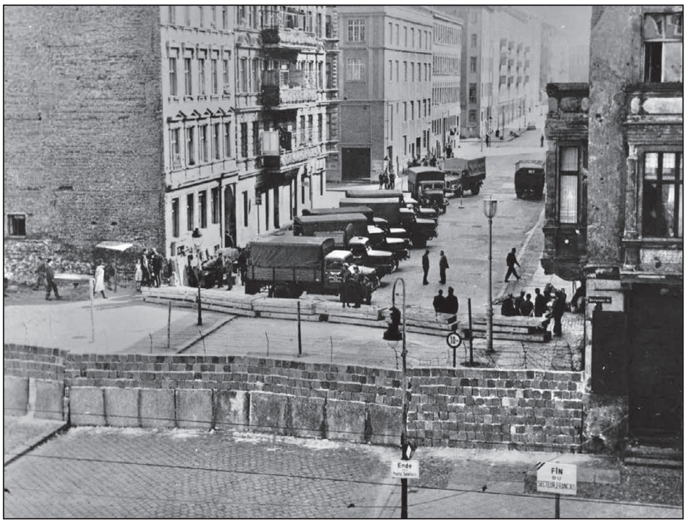
The fourth floor windows of the evacuated tenement blocks on Bernauer Straße are bricked up, supervised by *Vopos* and *Stasi*, 3 October 1961. (US National Archives)

Bernauer Straße

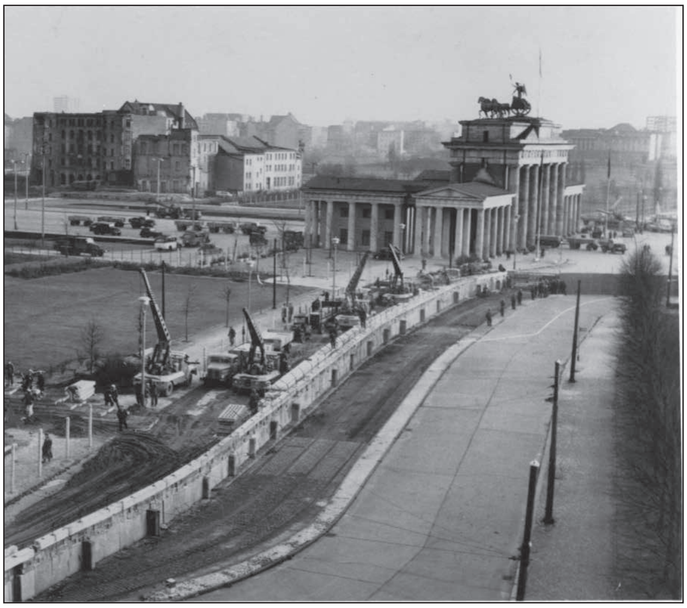
Three *Vopos* stretch to get a look over a cemetery wall which happens to run along the West Berlin border, 1961. (US National Archives)



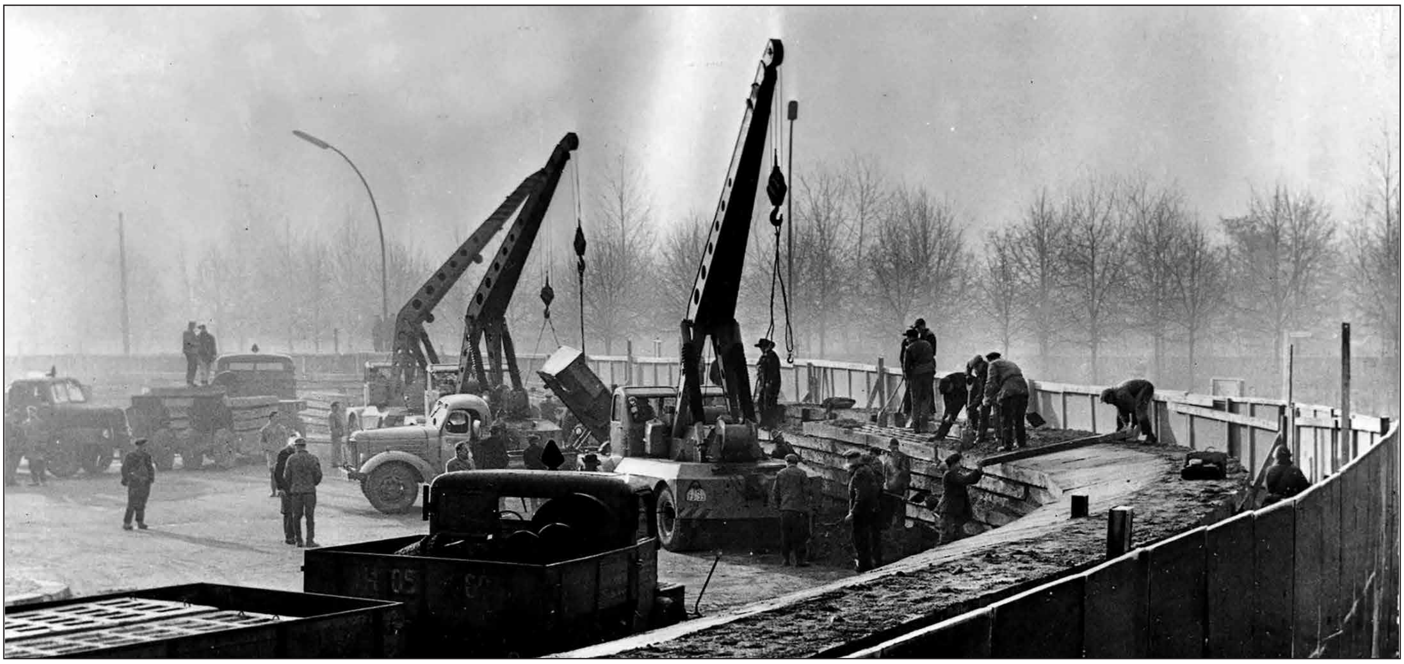
While occupants of Bernauer Straße are being forcibly evicted from their apartments, the *Volkspolizei* hold up mirrors to blind reporters and cameramen from the West. 24 September 1961. (US National Archives)



Border Evacuation – East German Army trucks line up to move furniture out of houses along Bernauer Straße in Berlin. (US National Archives)

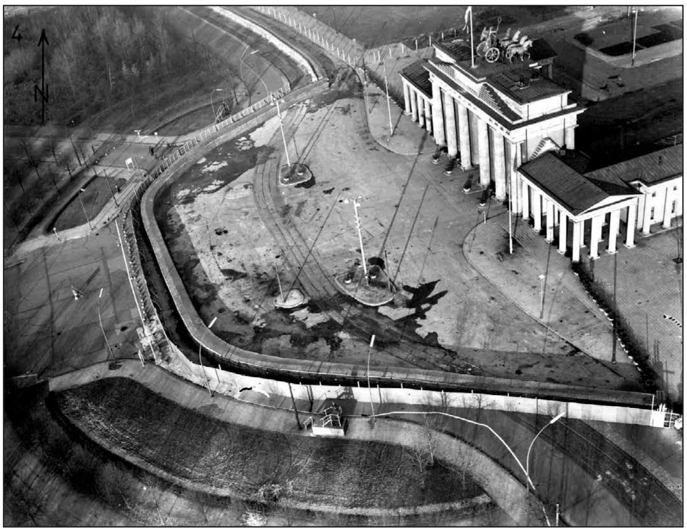


Conventional first generation Wall ran either side of the bulge at the Brandenburg Gate. (US National Archives)



Behind tall hoardings, a formidable barrier was created around the bulge from a sandwich of large pre-cast concrete blocks as used on the IGB to create patrol roads. (Albert Grandolini)

Two British soldiers observe the Wall construction at the Brandenburg Gate from the roof of their Humber 'Pig' armoured truck. November 1961 (CIA).



Aerial view of the Brandenburg Gate, showing the distinctive bulge, 22 November 1961. (US National Archives)

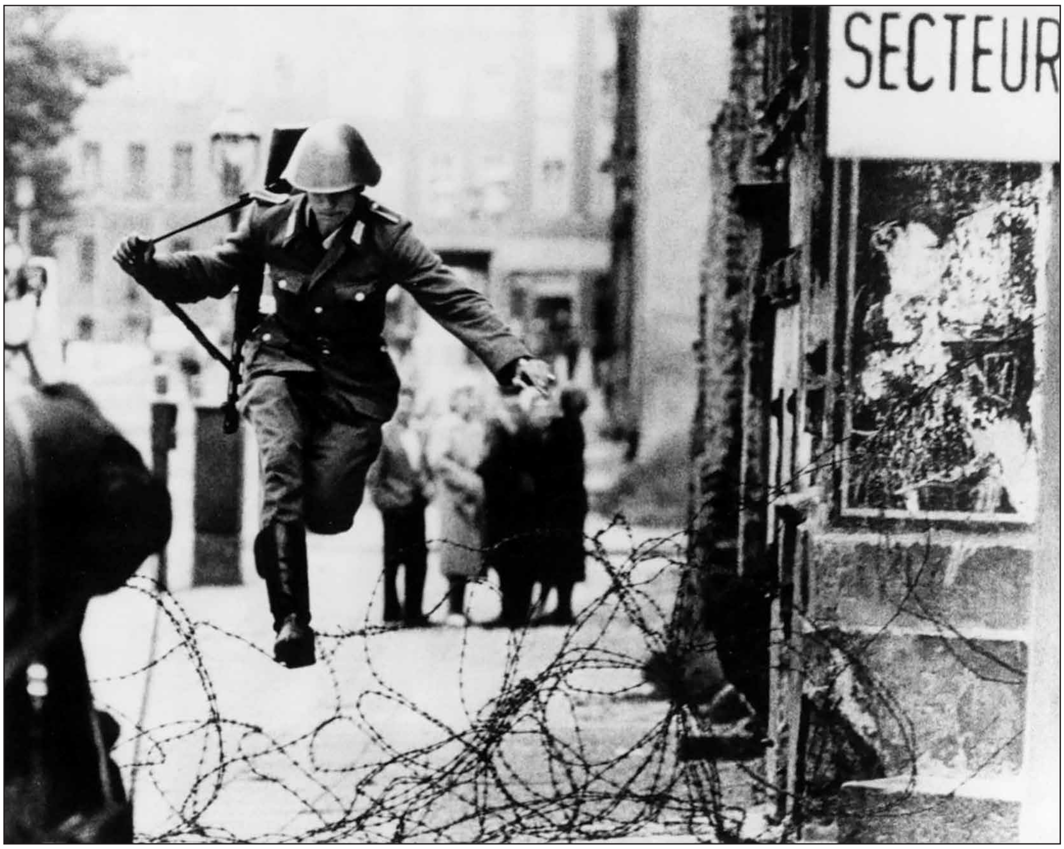
Bernauer Straße

Bernauer Straße formed part of the border between the Berlin districts of Wedding and Mitte and the French and Soviet sectors. Because of a quirk of bygone city planners, it became symbolic of the absurdity of East Germany's plan – the pavements and apartment buildings on its northern side were in the French sector of West Berlin, while the buildings on the southern side of the road were in East Berlin. A person on the southern side stepping out of their front door onto the pavement would effectively be crossing the border. This nondescript city centre residential street became the unwitting host to some of the most dramatic and heart wrenching episodes in the early days and weeks of the Berlin Wall.

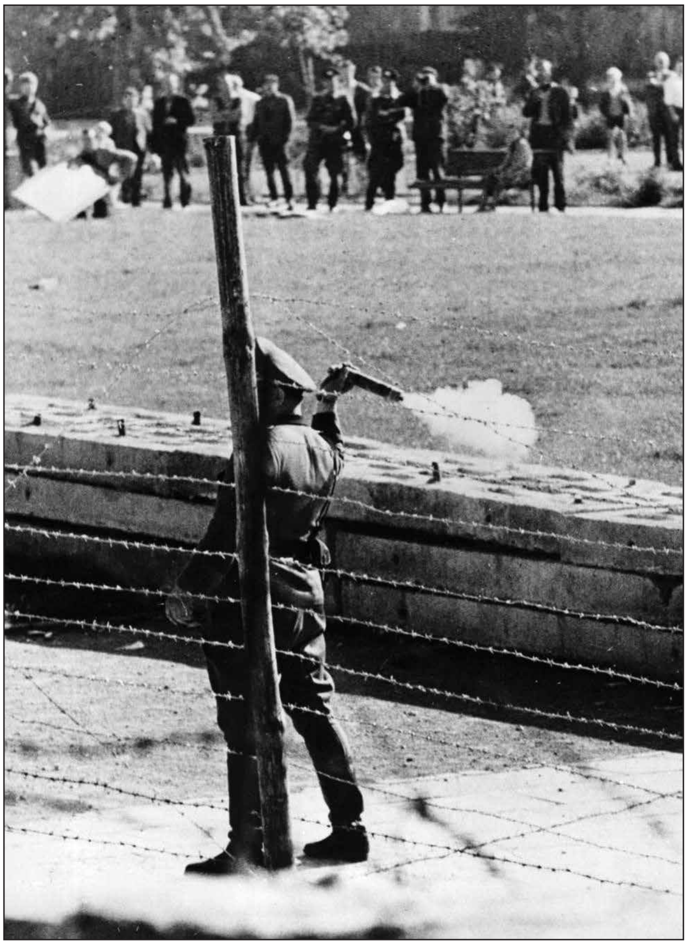
Khrushchev and Ulbricht had highlighted the unusual circumstances of Bernauer Straße in their meeting earlier that month and it received special attention on Barbed Wire Sunday. Frantic attempts to escape were made, with people abseiling from roofs that had fallen on the 'wrong' side of the border and jumping from first and second floor apartment block windows before they too were bricked up. West Berliners and fire crews helped people jumping and climbing down, watched by large crowds.

The first fatality of Operation Rose was on 22 August when 59-year-old Ida Siekmann jumped from a third floor window of a block in Bernauer Straße and missed the mattress that was being held out for her. A man was badly injured on 19 August after falling from the roof, succumbing to his injuries on 17 September.[12] On 24 September, there was an unseemly tussle when *Vopos* and *Stasi* attempted to pull a 77-year-old grandmother back through the window that she had just climbed out of, though ultimately she did escape.

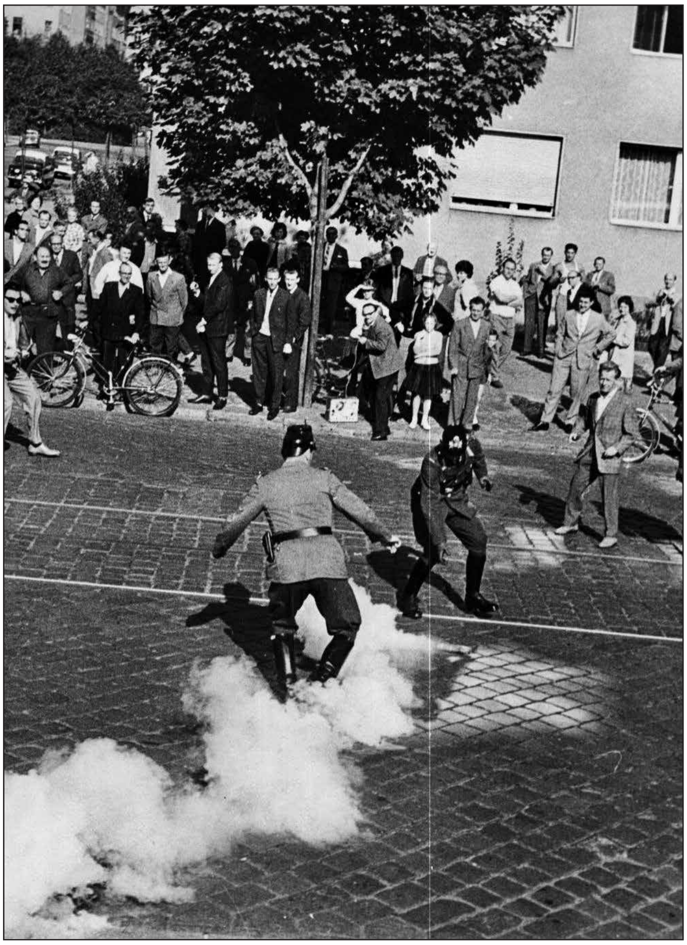
On the same day, the 2,000 residents of Bernauer Straße were given four days' notice to leave their homes and all the doors onto the street and ground floor windows were hastily bricked up. In other streets and blocks adjacent to the border, residents were also swiftly evicted, and many buildings were soon demolished to create an effective 'cordon sanitaire' and clean field of fire behind the Wall.



Peter Leibing's famous photograph of Conrad Schumann leaping to freedom on 15 August 1961. (CIA)



An East German police officer prepares to throw a tear gas grenade, as West Berliners jeer in the background, October 1961. (CIA)



Two West Berlin Policemen scramble for a grenade as it hits ground. A moment later the missile sails back over the fence, October 1961. (US National Archives)

Brandenburg Gate

The Brandenburg Gate was always going to be significant, as demonstrated by the unprecedented number of troops deployed there on 13 August. The line of the border created a distinctive bulge of East Berlin territory in front of the famous Gate, which was effectively no-man's land. The East Germans chose to build a formidable non-standard barrier along the bulge, which is very evident from the aerial views.

Near the Brandenburg Gate was the Soviet War Memorial, which happened to be in the British sector.[13] The memorial was guarded by Soviet soldiers, who were bussed across the sector border every day and the British Army guarded the Soviets, primarily to stop West Berliners causing an international incident. In a wonderfully theatrical move, the British Army surrounded the Soviet War Memorial in Tiergarten with Barbed Wire to protect it from the angry West Berlin citizens and thus the Soviets were caged in and had to parade behind it. The Soviets were suitably incensed.

Desertions and Demonstrations

On 15 August, as the construction crews got to work, Conrad Schumann, a 19-year-old East German border guard, was photographed by West German photojournalist, Peter Leibing, leaping over the barbed wire barrier on the corner of Bernauer Straße and Ruppiner Straße to freedom and a new life in the West.[14] Leibing's timely shot became one of the Cold War's most iconic images.

In the first 36 hours, a further nine guards would also defect, rising to 85 in the first six weeks. As a result, extra political and ideological training was ordered for the troops engaged on border patrols and the border force increasingly became an elite unit, only taking the 'best' troops. Despite this, single person patrols were banned, and *Grenztruppen* were sent out in 2s or 3s so they could watch over each other. Over time, the *Stasi* placed many 'Unofficial Collaborators' (*IM*, *Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter*) among the ranks to monitor morale and pre-empt or stop defections.[15]

All along the border, weak points in the wire were also exploited, allowing a brief window for a few people to escape, until East German armoured cars arrived and border troops closed the gaps. According to official DDR figures (although Marienfelde arrival numbers were higher), 28 escapers made it over the Wall during the night of the 13-14th, and 41 the following night. Some escaped by swimming the canal that weaved through the city, but compared to the previous few days, it was clear that the closure had been particularly effective. In the month after Barbed Wire Sunday, another 417 East Germans managed to slip across to the West, rising to more than 600 by mid-September, much to the annoyance of the East German authorities, but the number of refugees reaching Marienfelde and being processed through the system quickly reduced to a trickle.

In the months to come, there were several incidents and large-scale demonstrations in West Berlin against the Wall. On 27 October 1961 a large group of West German youths had to be broken up by a sizeable force of West German police as they tried to tear up a section of the barbed wire in the French sector. Twenty-two East Berliners took advantage of the disturbance to escape to the West. On 6 November 1961, East and West German police threw more than 150 tear gas canisters at each other over the recently constructed Wall, in the biggest confrontation since the Wall was built.

On 20 November 1961, West German police in full riot gear drove back thousands of young West Berliners who were trying to storm the Wall. The West Berlin Police were not endorsing the Wall in any way, but lawlessness in their sectors could easily lead to an escalation from a minor scuffle to a major international incident.

7

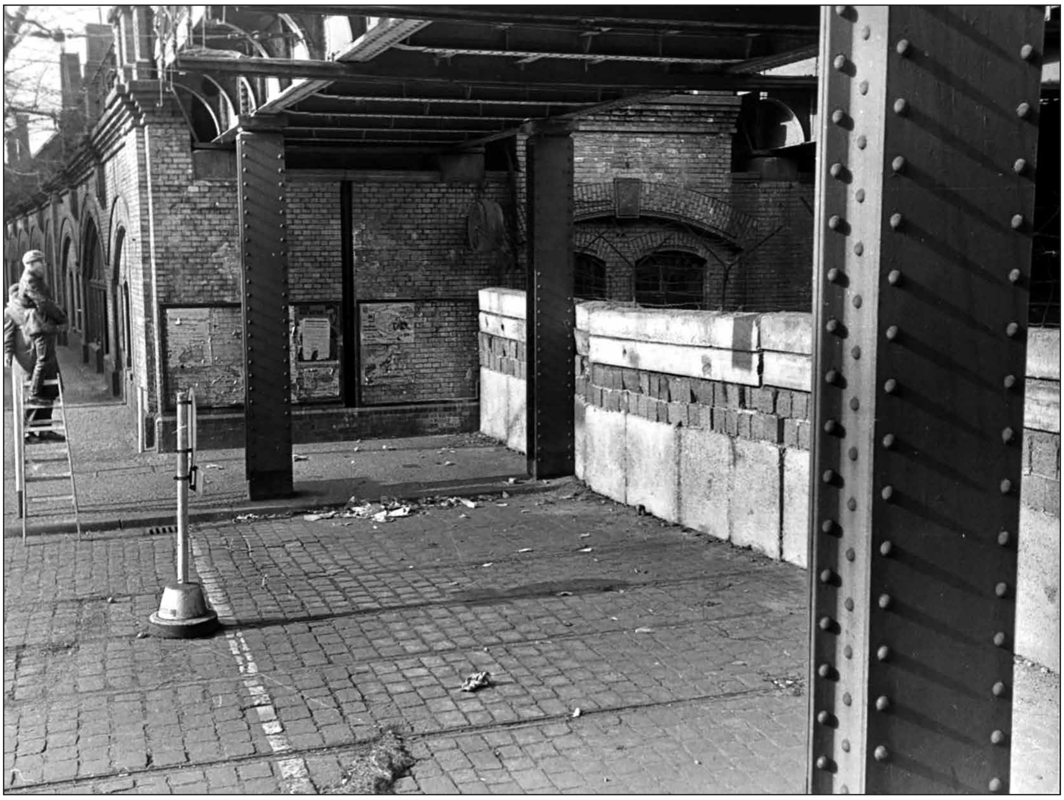
A NEW REALITY

Back in Berlin, during the months following Barbed Wire Sunday, the city settled into its perverse new routine. The bureaucracy and officiousness that would become the norm in any dealings with the East German authorities began to kick in. In the East, citizens in the border zone – assuming their house had not already been levelled – had to apply for a pass and show it every time they left and returned home. The *Vopos* cross referenced any application with the *Stasi*, looking for any flags that suggested the applicant was undesirable or potential escape material. In order to visit relatives who lived in the 'border zone', a special permit from the *Vopos* had to be applied for, with a wait of up to 4 weeks for permission. Again, these applications were carefully vetted. Special passes were also needed for those required to work within the zone or to visit one of the several cemeteries located close to the border.

Public transport around West Berlin was severely disrupted after the border closure. The network crossed back and forth across the border and was run by the East Germans, so they could rebuild the network to suit the new border regime. Eight S-Bahn and four U-Bahn lines were simply cut off with the tracks ripped up. Trains would no longer stop at certain stations with empty platforms patrolled by *Grenztruppen* or bricked up (the so-called "ghost stations"). In East Berlin, all 48 S-Bahn stations were closed for inter-sector travel and 13 of 33 U-Bahn stations were closed completely. A special platform was established for transiting FRG citizens and foreigners at Friedrichstraße Station, the city's main transit intersection.

On 23 August 1961 the number of crossing points was reduced to seven: two for West Germans, four for West Berliners and a single crossing at Checkpoint Charlie on Friedrichstraße for 'foreigners' and diplomats. West Berliners also now had to apply for visas, whereas before they could just show their ID card to get across. The East Germans demanded that two 'Travel Agencies' were set up in West Berlin, from which these visas could be obtained. Brandt refused to play along with this last condition, which meant that East Berlin was effectively off-limits to West Berliners. After harassment of US and Allied personnel passing through Checkpoint Charlie, the US set up a permanent military police detachment there to deter further problems, and which remained in one form or another until June 1990.

East Berlin workers who found themselves unable to go to their jobs in the Western sectors (the so-called *Grenzgänger*) were particularly badly affected. In the West they earned West D-Marks, which had a hugely inflated buying power in the East. This financial advantage evaporated overnight, and they saw their previous careers



The Berlin Wall cutting straight through a station platform at Wollankstraße. (US National Archives)

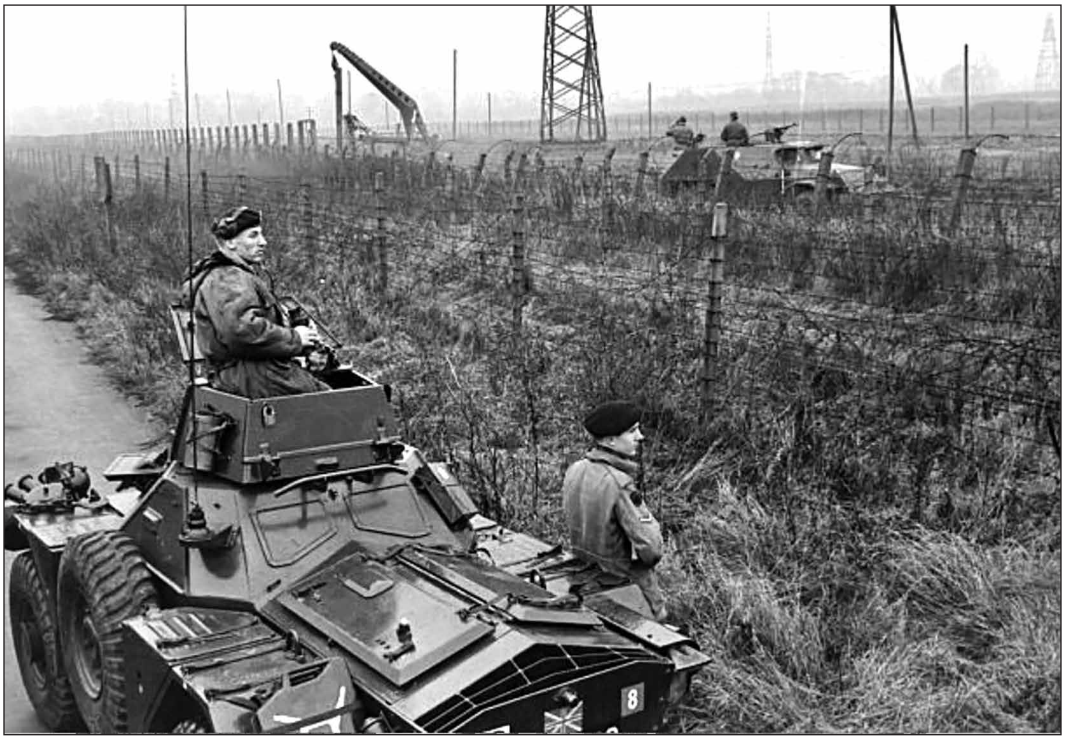
and status wiped clean, being allocated new jobs through mandatory work placement schemes. The new positions were generally unskilled and low paid and they suffered ongoing official discrimination and persecution from the East Berlin authorities. Teachers who had taught in the West were banned from education in the East for life and students who had studied in the West were generally not allowed to finish their studies. Students taking much needed technical subjects were eventually allowed to restart their studies once they had been properly vetted as the East needed these skills but those who had studied 'liberal' or arts subjects found themselves being placed in menial jobs. Young children previously schooled in the West, were allowed to continue in the East but older students found themselves pushed into apprenticeships. The only route to higher education was dependent on the students' and parents' conformity to the regime. Care was taken to avoid 'concentrations' in any East workplace or school of those who had worked or studied in the West, to reduce the risk of unrest.

The Allied forces continued high-profile patrolling along the border and around the city, emphatically asserting their right to be there, but by late September, primary responsibility for manning crossing points and patrolling the border was handed to the West Berlin Police.

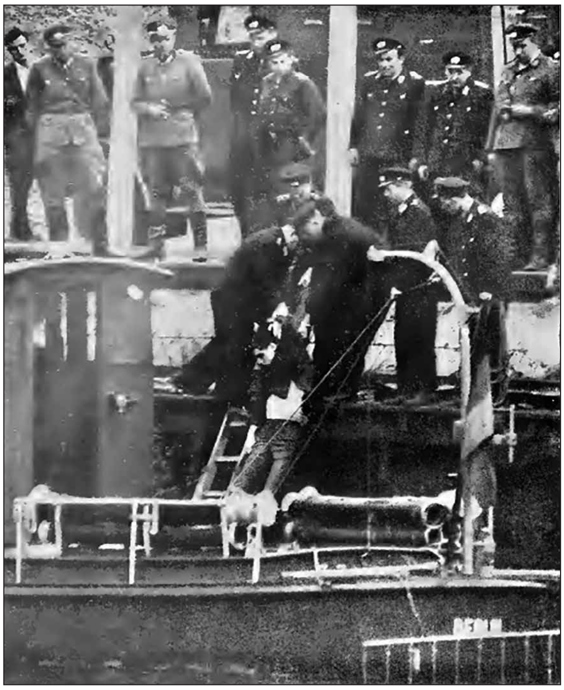
Border Policing

Border security was at the very heart of the East German regime, so it is little wonder that they established a border police force as early as December 1946, with the formation of the *Deutsche Grenzpolizei* (*DGP*), organised under the various incarnations of the East German Interior Ministry. With the building of the Wall, it was decided to militarise the border forces and on 15 September 1961, they became the *Grenztruppen der Nationale Volksarmee*, under the civilian *Ministerium für Nationale Verteidigung*, the Ministry of National Defence or *MfNV*. On 28 February 1974, the *Grenztruppen* were brought under the control of the *Ministerium des Innern*, the East German Ministry of the Interior (*MdI*) and were renamed the *Grenztruppen der DDR*. This was cynical ploy to ensure that border force numbers were not affected by the force reduction negotiations that were underway between East and West at the time.

On 22 August 1961, 10 days after Operation Rose, the East German Politburo issued one of their most controversial orders, one which would come back to haunt them in later years. In what became known as the *Schießbefehl* (the Shoot Order, often referred



The crew of a British Army Ferret scout car look over a rural section of the Berlin 'Wall' at a *Grenztruppen* BTR-152. (US National Archives)



East German *Wasserschutzpolizei* (Water Police) retrieve the body of Günter Litfin, who was shot trying to swim across the Humboldt Dock to the West. (Federal Ministry for All-German Questions of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany)

to as the Shoot-to-kill Order), the *NVA* and *Vopos* were instructed '*that everyone who violates the laws of our DDR – even if necessary – is called to order by using the weapon*', that is, use of deadly force was permitted.[1] This order was reiterated again on 20 September 1961 ('*to use firearms against traitors and border violators*'),[2] and on 6 October 1961 ('*for the arrest of persons who do not obey the orders of the border guards by answering the call 'Stop – stand still – border guards!' or do not stand still after firing a warning shot, but obviously try to violate the state border of the GDR and there is no other possibility of arrest*').[3]

In November 1962, the Ministry of Defence mandated in Order 101/62 '*that every border soldier is trained to become an excellent marksman and that he is able to destroy every stationary and moving target with the first shot (burst of fire) day and night*', with *Grenztruppen* receiving more firearms training than their *NVA* colleagues.[4]

The *Volkskammer* (People's Chamber, the so-called East German parliament) gave the shoot-to-kill policy a veneer of legitimacy and legality in 1982 with the 'Law on the State Border of the German Democratic Republic (Border Law)'.[5]

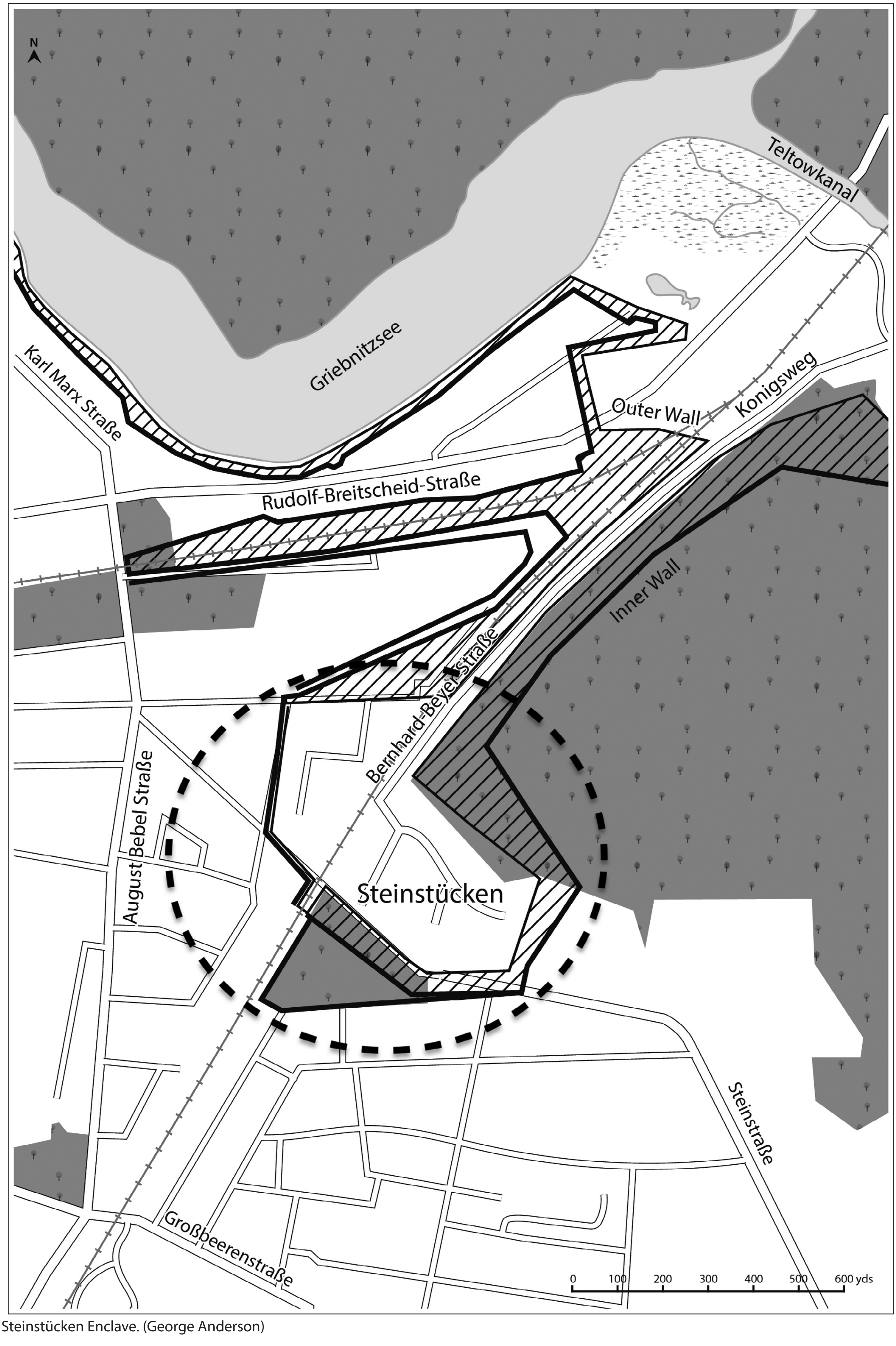
The *Schießbefehl* was the third pillar of the *SED*'s border strategy; a supposedly impregnable barrier, a strong border force and the shoot-to-kill policy. The *SED* realised from the outset that only the ultimate sanction, death by shooting or by mines, was sufficient deterrent to permanently prevent the mass exodus of its own population, and therefore ensure the survival of the regime.

The use of lethal force became a key part of border force doctrine, reinforced with constant political training, where the West was the enemy and *Republikflüchtlinge* were traitors to the Republic and should be treated without mercy. Successful interceptions or killings were rewarded with the 'Medal for Exemplary Border Service', with gifts of money and goods, and promotions. In any dispute, or investigation, the authorities always sided with the guard and during the life of the Wall no border policeman or soldier was prosecuted for illegal firearms use. The first victim of the policy fell under the hail of bullets from a border guard's machine gun on 24 August 1961 when 24-year-old Günter Litfin was shot and killed by a *Trapo* (*Transportpolizei*, East German Transport Police) while trying to swim over the Humboldthafen (Humboldt Dock) to the British sector. Five days after that, Roland Hoff became the second, shot and killed while swimming across the Teltow Canal in the American sector.

The guards, however, were expressly forbidden to shoot into West Berlin territory, to avoid provoking an international incident. On 4 October 1961, while pursuing an escapee on Bernauerstraße, East German border guards accidentally fired into the Western zone, prompting the West Berlin Police to fire back, wounding one of the guards. As expected, the incident prompted high-level complaints from the West Berlin authorities and Allied occupying forces. Over the life of the Wall, the West Berlin Police counted 456 bullet marks on walls and pavements adjacent to the Wall (discounting bullet and shrapnel damage remaining from the Second World War).[6]

President John Kennedy (USA) addresses the 16th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 25 September 1961. (UN)

Once the border had been sealed, the East German authorities were able to do any 'housekeeping' they needed with no external scrutiny. By the end of August 1961, 2,192 people were arrested in East Berlin alone, and 691 were subsequently jailed. By October, most dissent had been suppressed with the iron fist of the *Stasi* and police. Around 7,200 dissenters were arrested for political offences


N
Teltowkanal
Griebnitzsee
Karl Marx Straße
Outer Wall
Konigsweg
Rudolf-Breitscheid-Straße
Inner Wall
Bernhard-Beyer-Straße
August Bebel Straße
Steinstücken
Steinstraße
Großbeerenstraße
0
100
200
300
400
500
600 yds

The Steinstücken Enclave. (George Anderson)

Construction of the Soviet War Memorial in Tiergarten began almost as soon as the fighting stopped in 1945. When Berlin was divided, Tiergarten fell within the British sector though was still attended on a daily basis by a Soviet honour guard. When the Wall was erected in 1961 the British authorities enclosed the memorial within its own mini-Wall of barbed wire. This photograph shows the memorial as it appeared in 2019. (Private collection)

during the second half of 1961, compared to 1,500 in the first half. These were small numbers compared to 1953, but still significant.

Clay – Loose Cannon

If the situation in the city was not tense enough, General Clay, hero of the Berlin Airlift, began throwing his weight around. His unconventional approach and gung-ho attitude were sowing confusion and mayhem amongst the Western Allies like a proverbial loose cannon. For example, he ordered the resumption of US patrols of the autobahns, with instructions to intervene in any incidents where US vehicles had been stopped. The White House ordered the end of these patrols after a week or so, following top level complaints from Moscow. He also ordered the construction of a replica Wall in the woods on the outskirts of West Berlin to test whether a suitably adapted tank would be able to smash through it. General Clarke, the head of US forces in Europe found out and immediately shut the test down, but not before Soviet agents had photographed it, confirming in Moscow's mind, the West's intention to invade East Berlin.

The building of the Wall highlighted numerous quirks of geography. One of the most dramatic was the tiny enclave of Steinstücken, close to the Griebnitzsee just south of the American sector. By an accident of 1920s city planning, the small 31-acre (12.5 hectare) settlement of around 200 West Berlin citizens was incorporated into one of the boroughs that formed the American sector of West Berlin, despite being just over a kilometre inside East Germany. After failing to annex the settlement in 1951, the East Germans surrounded the enclave in barbed wire and the only way to the city and the outside world for work, school, shopping or seeing friends, was via a single road and via several East German checkpoints. Once the wall went up, a number of East Germans, including around 20 border guards, used the relatively lax security around the village to jump across the wire to freedom in the West, albeit as prisoners inside this tiny enclave. The 70 or so refugees were helicoptered to real freedom in the city a few days later. The East German authorities quickly plugged this hole in their border by building a Wall around the whole settlement, with watch towers and tank traps, and patrolled by a team of 200 border troops.

On 21 September 1961, General Clay paid a high-profile, highly symbolic and very provocative visit to the enclave, arriving by helicopter. His objective was to reassure Steinstücken's residents, and to remind the East Germans, that this tiny enclave was not going to be forgotten. To deter any further mischief from the East Germans, he set up a permanent military post in the village manned by three US military policemen, who were rotated in and out by helicopter every few days.[7]

Although Clay's reputation gave him a fair amount of latitude, his unusual intervention at Steinstücken upset a number of people further up the chain of command. However, he overstepped the mark when he began offering unsolicited advice to the White House and State Department, threatening to resign if he did not get his own way. Clay's maverick streak risked taking the parties right to the brink and he would have to be tamed.

Kennedy's UN Speech 25 September 1961

As the tension around Berlin steadily grew, the UN General Assembly met in New York giving the world its first glimpse of how the US was going to respond to the momentous events in Berlin. The recent death of the much-respected UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold in a plane crash had shaken the global community and when Kennedy took the podium on 25 September, he stressed the importance of the organisation to world peace: '*For we far prefer world law, in the age of self-determination, to world war, in the age of mass extermination*'.[8]

Kennedy used his speech to highlight the dangers in the global hotspots of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Berlin, all of which were threatened by some form of communist aggression, but it was the passage on Berlin that Moscow and much of the world was waiting for. Kennedy dismissed any discussion of 'peace treaties' or 'free cities', both subjects repeatedly raised by Khrushchev, saying they were hollow phrases unless backed by true freedom and self-determination and reiterated his deep commitment to the free people of West Berlin. The US and her allies would not yield to threats of force. He said that the crisis was totally unnecessary and that it should be resolvable by reasonable discussion and negotiation: '*For there is no need for a crisis over Berlin, threatening the peace-- and if those who created this crisis desire peace, there will be peace and freedom in Berlin*'.

This was the critical message for Khrushchev, that the door for negotiation was still open even after the abomination of 13 August. It is likely that this message was reinforced via the Bobby Kennedy/ Georgi Bolshakov back-channel as well. The apparent conciliation in the speech went down well in East Berlin and received much coverage, albeit severely edited. It did not go down as well in West Berlin and Bonn, where it was seen as being overly accommodating to the Soviet leader after the brutal act of 13 August. Kennedy appeared to be treading a very delicate path.

8

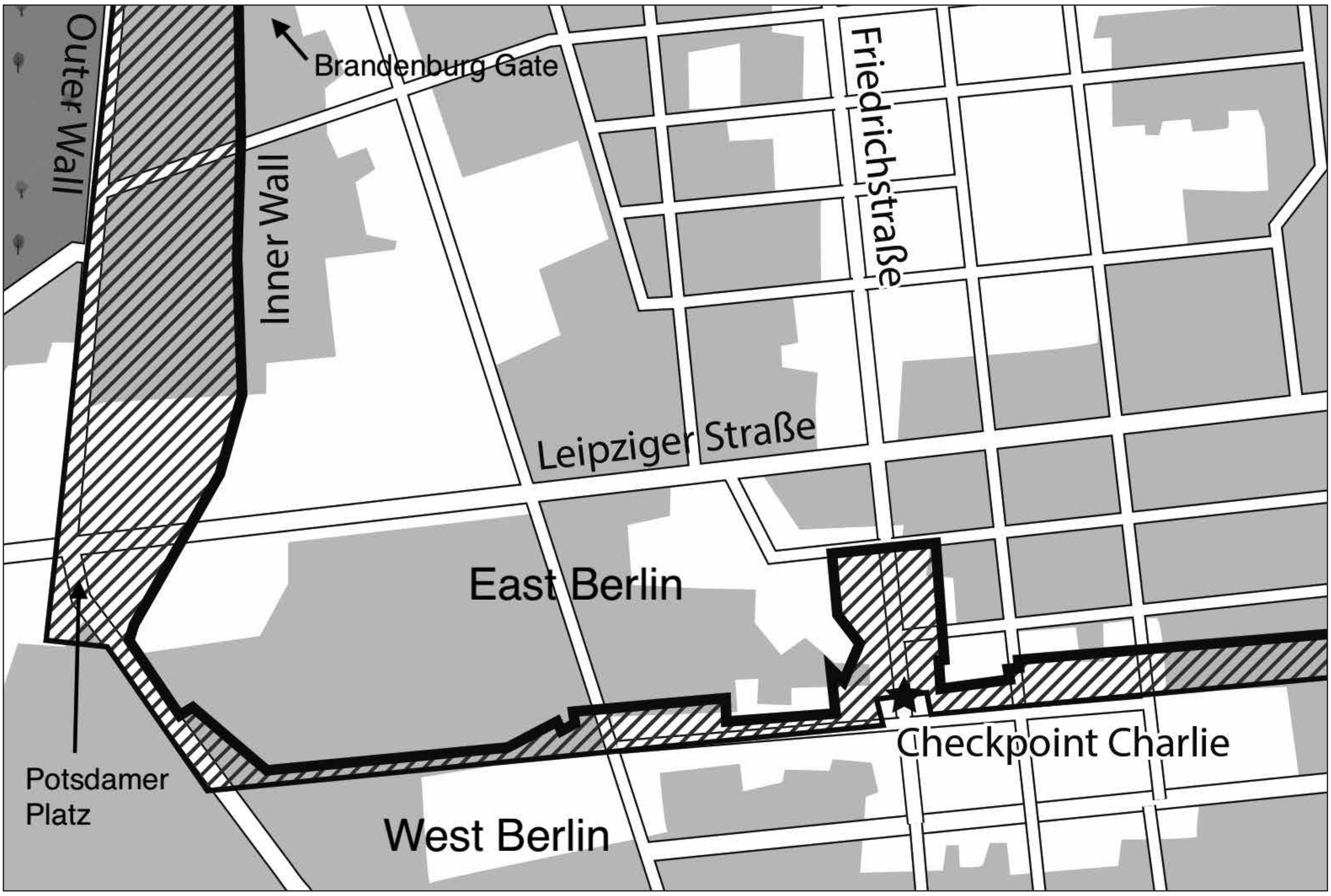
CONFRONTATION AT CHECKPOINT CHARLIE

If 1961 had not been dramatic enough so far, the month of October would prove to be even more dangerous, with the pace of events even surpassing the heady days of August. Once again, world events tumbled into each other with an almost unstoppable momentum.

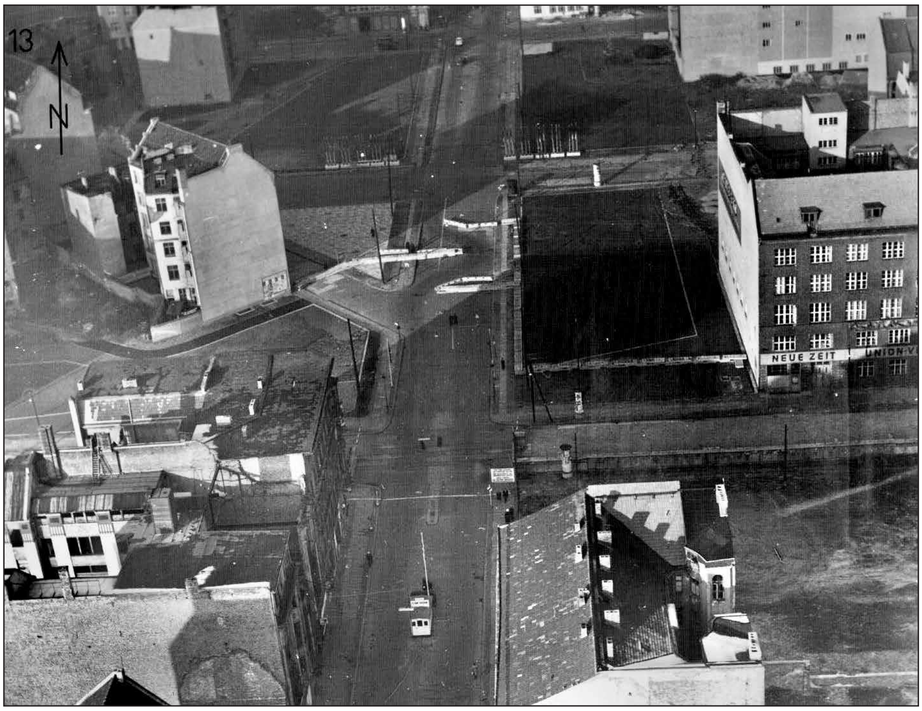
The 22nd Congress of the Communist Party Congress of the Soviet Union took place in Moscow from the 17th to the 31st. Khrushchev was under pressure from various quarters, the communist Chinese in particular and many had still had not forgiven him for his 1956 denunciation of Stalin. On the other hand, Khrushchev succeeded in bringing Cuba to communism after the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion, was winning the Space Race with the Americans and had acted decisively over Berlin. The Congress was a critical moment in Khrushchev's leadership of the worldwide communist family.

Much to Ulbricht's surprise, at the beginning of the Congress on 17 October 1961, Khrushchev announced that his ultimatum to the West was rescinded, and he did not plan a separate peace treaty with the DDR in the near future. In many ways, Ulbricht's fanatical closing of the border and building of the Wall had worked against him, as had his hard-line approach. Ulbricht had yearned for international recognition of his fledgling state but now the Wall was in place there was no room for manoeuvre for either the East or the West, so for the superpowers, a peace agreement – and the control Ulbricht wanted – was no longer a priority. His urgency to solve the refugee problem with a very tangible monument to his communist ideals, had, for the time being, scuppered his chances for ultimate power. It had not provoked the West into negotiations as he had hoped and, in the process, he had used up a lot of goodwill with his masters in Moscow. Khrushchev was perfectly aware that Ulbricht was operating within the rule of the Kremlin's law, but not in the spirit of it, and knew that he needed to keep the East German leader on a very short leash.

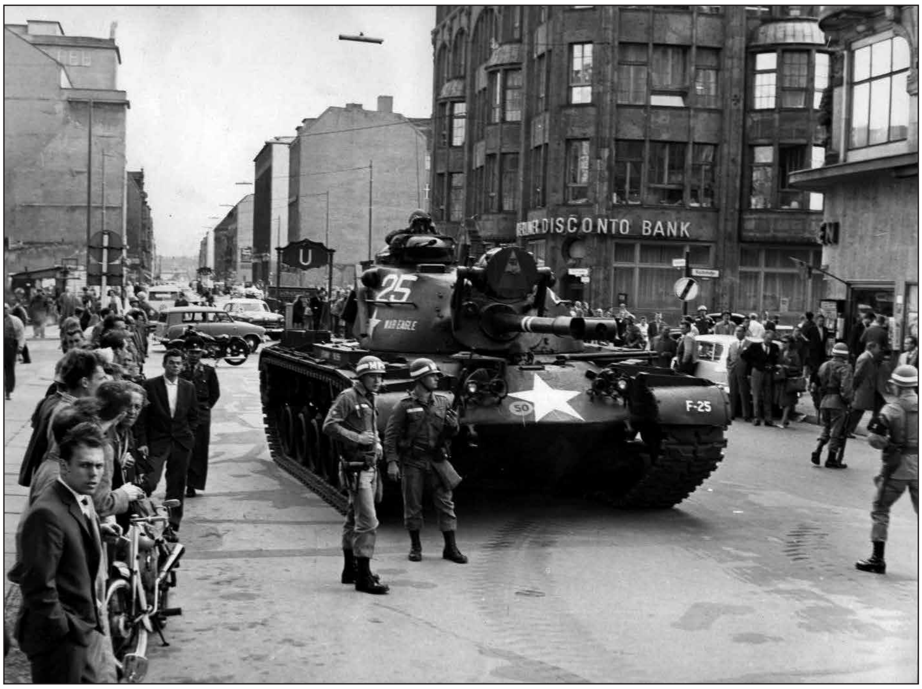
With both Ulbricht and Clay throwing their weight around on either side of the Wall and with so much still unresolved, Berlin was a tinderbox waiting for a spark. In the weeks and months that



Checkpoint Charlie on Friedrichstraße. The shaded area shows the extent of the DDR border fortifications. (George Anderson)



Overhead image of Checkpoint Charlie showing the road layout, border and Wall. (US National Archives)



A US M48A1 tank, this example named *War Eagle*, observes the situation at Checkpoint Charlie, overlooked by MPs and West Berlin civilians, October 1961. (US National Archives)

followed the building of the Wall, the East Germans increased their harassment of Western military and diplomatic personnel, particularly as they tried to cross from West to East, insisting they present their passes for inspection, directly in contravention of Soviet instructions and contravening the Four Power rights of free movement around the city. Clay saw this as an opportunity to take back the initiative and told the diplomats to resist these new checks, and staff were instructed to not cooperate with the East Germans.[1] On Sunday 22 October 1961, Edwin A. Lightner, the deputy head of the US Mission to Germany and the most senior US diplomat in West Berlin, and his wife tried to cross through Checkpoint Charlie to see a performance by a Czech theatre company in East Berlin.[2] They were in an official car bearing US occupying power plates. Asserting their Four Power access rights across the whole city, Allied military staff and diplomats were used to having free movement across all sectors, generally with just a casual wave of their ID cards at checkpoints while staying in their vehicles (although the Americans refused to even do that) and took advantage of the cultural and shopping opportunities available in the East.

On this occasion, the *Grepos* stopped the car and demanded to see proof of identity. As a point of principle, Lightner refused and demanded to see a Soviet officer – the Americans still did not 'recognise' East Germany as a country, so if any discussion about passes was going to take place, it was going to be with their fellow occupying power, that is, the Soviets. The *Grepos* stubbornly refused to let them through without seeing a pass. After waiting for over half an hour, Lightner decided to drive through regardless but was stopped by more guards and surrounded by armed troops. He very sensibly stayed locked in his car.

Alerted by Lightner's car radio, General Clay ordered a platoon of US military police, two M-59 armoured personnel carriers and four M48A1 Main Battle Tanks to Checkpoint Charlie to resolve the situation, one way or the other.[3] Clay and Berlin US Military Commander General Watson monitored activity from the bunker underneath the US Consulate in Clayallee (which had been named after General Clay in honour of his role in the 1948-49 Berlin Airlift).

Three squads of US MPs in Jeeps, and with bayonets fixed, advanced on Lightner's vehicle and escorted him slowly through the rest of the checkpoint, with the *Grepos* sensibly deciding to step aside. Clearing the barriers, the highly unusual convoy continued several blocks into East Germany just to prove a point, before turning round and crossing back into the West.

Lightner decided to try making the crossing again to prove his point and was stopped as before. A wave from Lightner summoned the troops again, who escorted him across for a second round-trip. By the time they had returned, the Soviet officer had turned up and there was a tense meeting between the *Grepos*, the Soviet officer and the Americans.

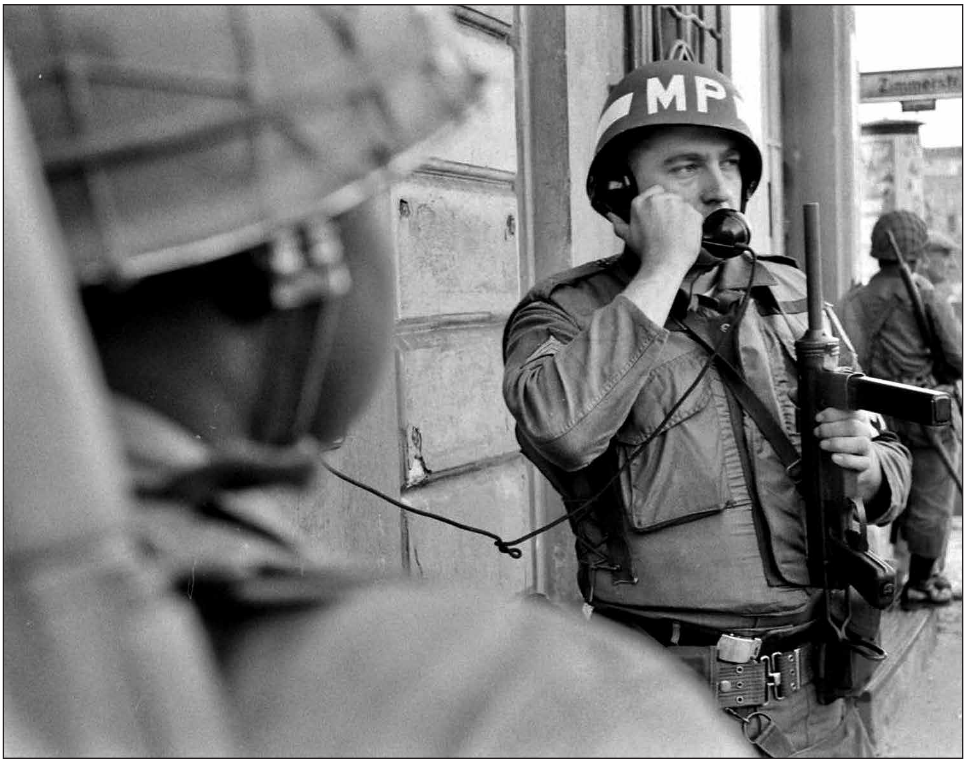
Having received an apology from the Soviet officer, Lightner embarked on a third trip, this time unopposed. With equal touches of drama and farce, an important point had been made, observed throughout by a growing crowd of journalists and spectators. Clay had won the first round, although the East Berlin press reported the incident as a 'border provocation'.

The following day, the DDR Interior Ministry, under orders from Ulbricht who was still in Moscow for the Communist Party Congress, announced that *all* foreigners in civilian clothes now had to show their ID before being allowed to pass through. This breached the long-standing custom and directly challenged the automatic right of access across sectors for the Allied Powers. In the meantime, the French and West Germans were complaining about the line the US was taking, and thus Kennedy found himself being attacked from all sides.

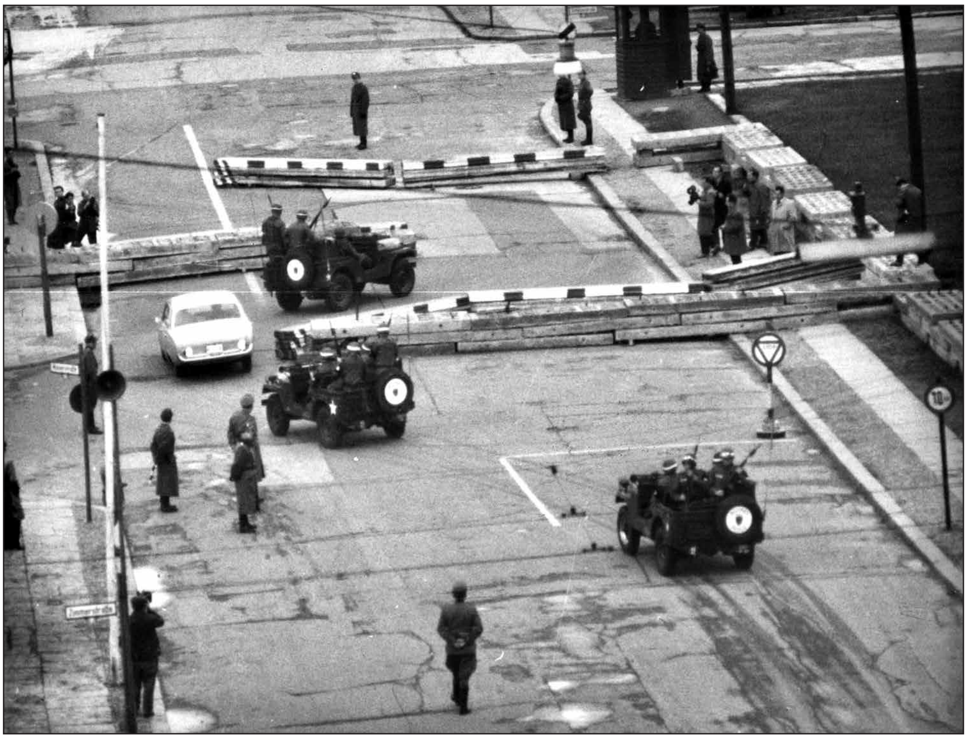
On Wednesday 25 October 1961, General Clay decided to attempt another border crossing, which was halted in the same manner. A US officer informed the East Germans that unless the civilian official's car was let through, a crossing would be made by force. To ram home the point, Clay issued orders for 10 American M48A1 tanks to be assembled close to Checkpoint Charlie while British tanks were to be deployed in nearby Tiergarten.

A high-level conference between the American and Soviet city commanders was called, after which the tanks were withdrawn. Several other crossings were attempted by US military personnel in civilian clothes using official civilian cars – some passed through unhindered, while others were refused entry and could only pass with a military escort.

The following afternoon – Thursday 26 October 1961 – several more excursions were made, each facing varying degrees of obstruction, and the American tanks returned, moving right up to the white line marking the border, with their guns trained at the East German border guards. The British decided it was time to test the waters and sent an official British car containing two BRIXMIS wives through the checkpoint on the pretence of wanting to buy some tickets to the East German State Opera, something that they regularly had done before the border closed, nonchalantly waving their passes at the guards, before heading to their usual ticket agency, purchasing their tickets and returning without incident.[4] A case of wives going where tanks feared to tread!



A US military policeman using the radio at Checkpoint Charlie, October 1961. He is armed with an M3A1sub machine gun. The tension of the situation is etched on his face. (Albert Grandolini)

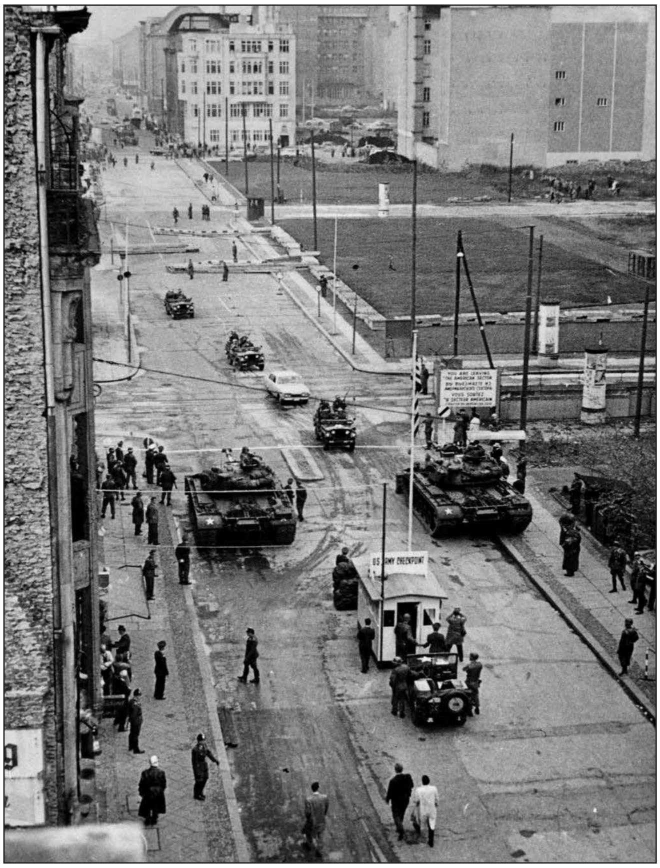


Three jeeps full of heavily armed MPs escort Edwin A. Lightner's car past the chicane on the Eastern side of Checkpoint Charlie, heading into East Berlin. October 1961 (CIA)

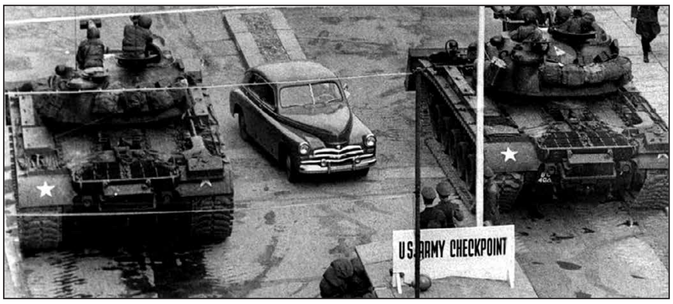
After five days of procedural 'skirmishes', the situation took a serious turn for the worse. On the afternoon of Friday 27 October, 10 T-55 tanks parked up on the East German side of the checkpoint, with their guns trained West. The tanks' national markings had been painted out and the crews wore plain black overalls, but it was obvious to all that the tanks were Soviet, especially as the *NVA* did not operate T-55s at that time. The T-55 main battle tank was a formidable beast, weighing in at 36 tonnes and packing a powerful 100mm gun. Designed to fight across the wide-open plains of Europe, its armament would have been devastating in the built-up environment of Friedrichstraße.

The US tanks, having successfully 'supervised' the day's diplomatic cross-border excursions, had just returned to their base at Templehof Airport, their crews ready for a well-deserved dinner. They quickly turned around and forced their way through Berlin's rush hour traffic to position themselves directly opposite the Soviets. This was the first time (and last, as it happens) that the former allies had faced each other at gunpoint. It was a watershed moment and with tensions so high, it could have quickly escalated into a proper shooting match.

As many as 30 further Soviet tanks were positioned in adjacent streets, out of



Heavily armed MPs escort Edwin A. Lightner's car back towards the American sector, passing between two M48A1 tanks at Checkpoint Charlie. October 1961. (US National Archives)

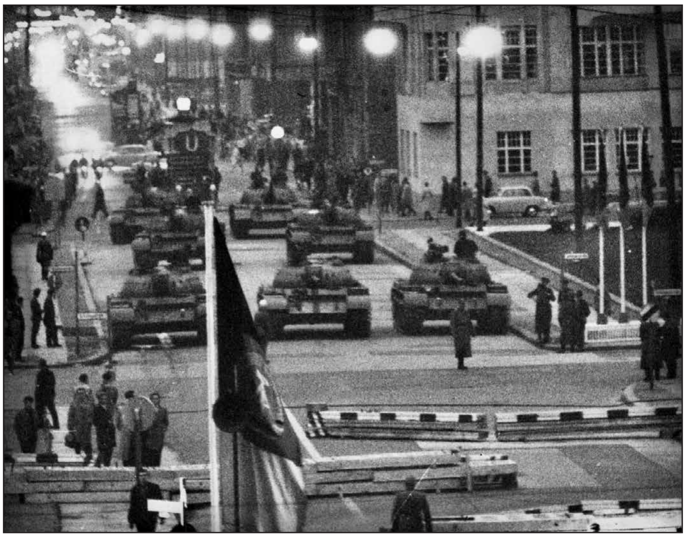


An unescorted car passes between two M48A1 tanks at Checkpoint Charlie, following an uninterrupted excursion into the East, October 1961. (Albert Grandolini)

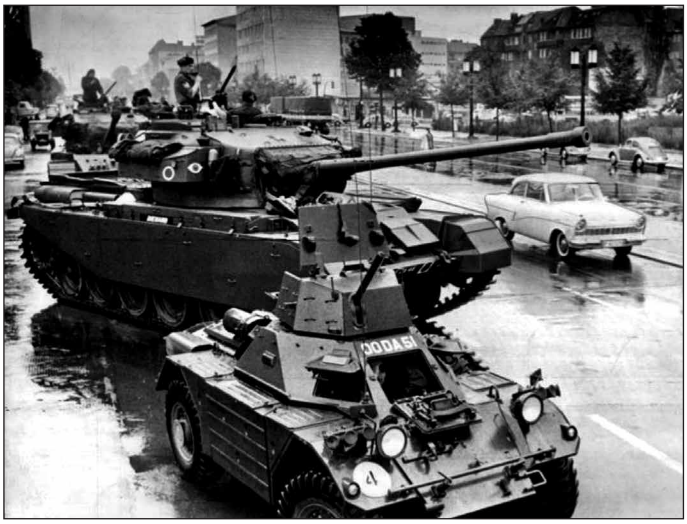
sight of the Americans. They were under strict orders not to shoot unless fired upon, although of course the Americans were not aware of this. They were joined by numerous APCs and the water cannons that had been used back in August. On the other side of the white line, 100 yards away on the West Berlin side of the checkpoint and in neighbouring side streets, 10 US M48A1 tanks stared down the barrels of their 90mm guns at the Soviet tanks.

The British tanks were still close-by in Tiergarten and the Brandenburg Gate and were joined by three anti-tank guns. The US garrison sent numerous jeeps, APCs and hundreds of heavily armed troops, while US helicopters buzzed overhead. All US and British forces in the city were put on full alert, deploying tanks and APCs at key intersections around the city. By all accounts, the French remained in their barracks throughout.

And so began a tense 16-hour standoff between the world's two superpowers. The next move in this deadly game was by the East Germans, who aimed powerful searchlights across the checkpoint, attempting to dazzle the American troops. The Americans retaliated with a massive 1,000,000 candle power xenon searchlight mounted



Soviet T-55 tanks line up on the Eastern side of Checkpoint Charlie, with their guns pointing at American tanks on the opposite side of the border, 27 October 1961. (US National Archives)



A British Army Centurion Mk5 main battle tank, and a Daimler Ferret scout car, positioned close to Checkpoint Charlie, October 1961. (Albert Grandolini)

Soviet and American tanks face each other at point blank range, October 1961. (Albert Grandolini)

A US officer observes the Soviet tanks through binoculars while leaning on a M48A1 tank at Checkpoint Charlie, October 1961. (CIA)

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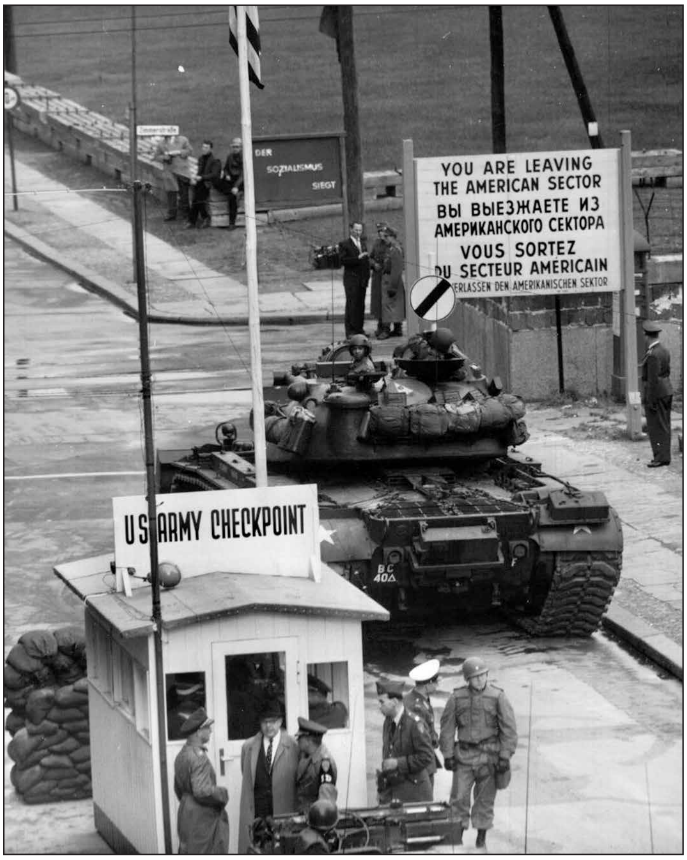
The crew of a US M48A1 tank climb up to get a better view over the Wall at Checkpoint Charlie, October 1961. (Albert Grandolini)


YOU ARE LEAVING
THE AMERICAN SECTOR
ВЫ ВЫЕЗЖАЕТЕ ИЗ
АМЕРИКАНСКОГО СЕКТОРА
VOUS SORTEZ
DU SECTEUR AMERICAIN
VERLASSEN DEN AMERIKANISCHEN SEKTOR
US ARMY CHECKPOINT
DER SOZIALISMUS SIEGT

A M48A1 tank moves right up to the white line denoting the border at Checkpoint Charlie, October 1961. (US National Archives)

An M48A1 tank commander and gunner peer out of their gun turret, which is pointing directly at an East German *Wasserwerfer SK II* water cannon over the Wall in the East. (Albert Grandolini)

on a tank, forcing the East Germans to turn their backs and retreat to the guard house. As well as trying to out-dazzle each other, the tanks' engines were started and aggressively revved, belching black exhaust smoke into the air. In hindsight, this bizarre mix of aggression and restraint may seem petty, but in the heady days just after the Wall went up, the danger was very real – it would only take one wrong move to spark a major confrontation. Bizarrely, all of this was being observed from the West side by a large group of spectators and press, watched over by West Berlin Police, while other West Berliners just carried on with their shopping and daily routine oblivious to all the drama going on around them.

Khrushchev had initiated the standoff that had begun under Ulbricht's orders and wanted to avoid further escalation but could not afford to lose face, domestically or internationally. His only route was to match force with force. He was also mindful of the reports he had received that the Americans had rehearsed bulldozing a replica section of wall and that they could be planning to attempt reversing Operation Rose by force.

The crisis had spread beyond the confines of the city of Berlin, with both NATO and Soviet forces all around the globe being put

Moster
ELEKTR
RADIO

US Army officers and their radio operator appraise the situation at Checkpoint Charlie, October 1961. The radio operator is carrying an M1 Garand rifle, while other soldiers at the scene had the newer M14. They all have gas masks slung from their belts (US National Archives)

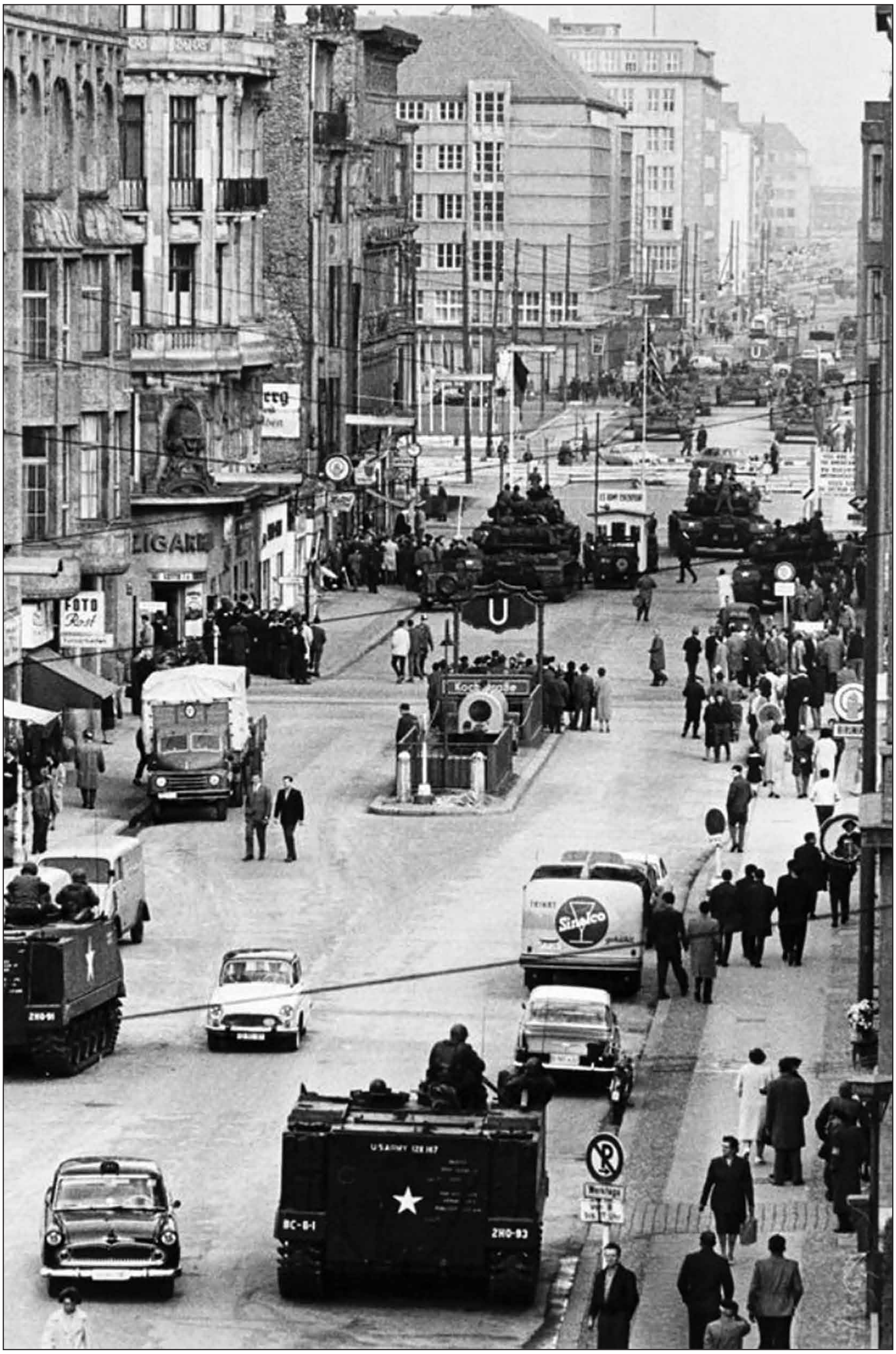
A West Berlin Policeman wearing the distinctive *Tschako* helmet. He would normally be armed with a Second World War vintage British Mk II Sten sub machine gun. The US soldier to his left is armed with an M14 rifle and wears a camouflage helmet cover. (Albert Grandolini)

A US MP aims an M20A1 ‘Super Bazooka’ at Soviet tanks and East German border guards across Checkpoint Charlie, October 1961. The MP standing on the left has an M14 rifle. (Albert Grandolini)

on high alert in case the situation escalated out of control. Ulbricht was able to limit domestic reporting of the incident within East Germany although it was extensively featured in Western media, which many East Germans could read or watch. He also managed to direct the situation on the ground from Moscow, insisting that his previous policy of requiring ID cards for civilian diplomats remained in place.

President Kennedy was concerned that the incident could lead to a full-on conflict, and while exploring conventional diplomatic avenues via his Moscow ambassador (which were to be rebuffed), he re-opened the back-channel dialogue with Moscow via his brother Robert Kennedy, the US Attorney General, and Georgi Bolshakov, the attaché/GRU officer from the Soviet embassy. Over several meetings during the standoff, Robert Kennedy delivered messages to Khrushchev asking for calm, reassuring him that the West had no intentions to march on East Berlin and stating that if the Soviets were to withdraw their tanks, the Americans would reciprocate.

This unconventional intervention seems to have done the trick, and on the morning of Saturday 28 October, on Khrushchev’s orders, the Soviets made the first move and withdrew their tanks. About 30 minutes later, having waited for instructions from above, the Allies did the same, along with most of their troops, and ‘normality’ finally resumed at the checkpoint. The exact deal between Khrushchev and Kennedy has remained secret, but the Americans stopped demanding an ID-free crossing for their civilian personnel and the East Germans and Soviets no longer tried to block access. The Western Allies remained on high alert for a few weeks, but to prove



A long shot showing the confrontation at Checkpoint Charlie in October 1961. In the foreground are US M59 APCs, the middle ground, M48A1 tanks and jeeps plus the famous guard hut. In the distance are Soviet T-55 tanks. All around the Americans are West Berliners spectating on the standoff or going about their daily lives, impervious to the dangers. Across the border, any non-uniformed personnel were likely to be *Stasi* officers, as civilians were not allowed near the actual border. (Albert Grandolini)

a point, Khrushchev kept Soviet forces in Germany on high alert until 11 January 1962. From this point on, Western diplomatic or military personnel made regular forays into the East to visit the opera or theatre as did Soviet personnel in the West, thus ensuring that the Four Power status was seen to be honoured by all parties. This pantomime continued until the Wall came down in 1989.

The 1961 Berlin crisis was thus resolved, and a form of peace had broken out. With the benefit of many decades' hindsight, and the dawning of the post-Soviet world, it is easy to view the standoff as childish pantomime, a dangerous game of chicken, which needed an urgent intervention by one of the 'grown-ups'. The scary reality was that the perpetrators were indeed the world's two superpowers, and the two leaders were as 'grown up' as you could get – the two most powerful people on the planet. The weapons poised were also deadly serious, and a swift escalation was highly likely if an error was made on the ground. A significant factor was the agent provocateur role that Ulbricht played in the whole affair, desperate to be able to join the 'big boy's game' and playing petty politics from the side-lines. Ulbricht, and his successor Honecker, would continue to be a thorn in the side of Soviet/US relations for many years to come. Clay's reputation in Washington had been tainted by his continued independent streak and was to remain in Berlin for only a few months longer before returning Stateside to continue his retirement.[5]

The last word on the 1961 crises goes to Khrushchev, who brought the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to a spectacular close on 30 October by announcing the successful detonation of the *Tsar Bomba*, the largest nuclear bomb the world has ever seen. The bomb itself was so big, it had limited military value, but as a flourish of undeniable showmanship, it helped provided an explosive coda to Khrushchev's year of triumphs; successful repulse of the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the first man into Space, the Vienna Summit with JFK, the Berlin Wall and now a successful Communist Party Congress.[6] The following year, 1962, would not go so well for him – the bungled siting of Soviet nuclear missiles on the Caribbean island of Cuba would lead to his downfall and eventual removal from power in a 1964 Politburo coup led by Leonid Brezhnev.

Kennedy, Brandt and Adenauer enjoy a 'ticker tape' arrival at Rudolph-Wilde-Platz in West Berlin. (Albert Grandolini)

West Berliners wave American flags in the crowd in front of Schöneberg Town Hall while JFK makes his famous *'Ich bin ein Berliner'* speech, 26 June 1963. (US National Archives)

1961 came to a close and the world breathed a collective sigh of relief. For the time being, at least, the threat of nuclear annihilation had subsided, and East Berlin was becoming experienced at practising an unusual form of border security – armed sentries to keep its own people in, rather than keep others out.

Ich bin ein Berliner

The October 1961 Berlin crisis was actually a direct cause of the more famous Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. If Kennedy had not appeared so weak over the Berlin crisis, Khrushchev never would have risked placing his nuclear missiles in Cuba. By positioning missiles that could threaten the American heartland, the global balance of power would shift in his favour and he would be in a much better position to force his preferred solution over Berlin. Throughout the crisis, Kennedy was convinced that the Soviet actions on the island of Cuba were ultimately designed to provoke a resolution to the Berlin situation. If the Americans attacked Cuba in any way, then the Soviets would feel justified in taking Berlin, and possibly take international opinion with them – Kennedy rejected proposals to strike the bases in Cuba for that very reason. Although some of Kennedy's advisers suggested that Berlin could be 'traded' in some way to get the missiles removed, Kennedy consistently stuck to his policy of protecting the city, even expressing concern that the naval blockade of Cuba could provoke a tit-for-tat Soviet blockade of Berlin. In public speeches and private conversations, Kennedy linked the status of these two Cold War hotspots: '*Any hostile move anywhere in the world against the safety and freedom of peoples to whom we are committed--including in particular the brave people of West Berlin--will be met by whatever action is needed*'. [7]

When Khrushchev backed down over Cuba, he also withdrew his troops from the West German border in order to defuse the tension. Both crises demonstrated to the Soviet leadership the urgency of having a comparable nuclear arsenal, leading to the arms race that would characterise international relations for the next few decades.

JFK's part in Berlin's folklore was not over. In June 1963, Kennedy became the first of the Western Allied leaders to visit the city since the Wall had gone up, just under two years earlier. Kennedy felt it was important to send a message of solidarity and support to the people of Berlin and show Khrushchev that he still cared about the city. He arrived on 26 June along with a huge media scrum from all over the world and was scheduled to deliver a speech in front of Schöneberg Town Hall, the de facto seat of power in West Berlin.

In front of an adoring crowd of around 400,000 Berliners crammed into Rudolph-Wilde-Platz, he delivered what has been described as one of the greatest speeches in history. The State Department were keen that Kennedy did not take a controversial line and risk the fragile peace that had fallen over the divided city. Visibly moved by his visit to Checkpoint Charlie and sections of the Wall that morning, his actual speech was much harder hitting and anti-communist than intended, with the president getting carried away by what he had seen and by the adulation of the crowd.

His message was that the communist and capitalist systems were inherently incompatible, and the Wall was a very obvious symbol of what was wrong with communism. He emphasised several times that those apologists who argued appeasement should come to Berlin and see communism in action for themselves: *'Lass' sie nach Berlin kommen'* – *'Let them come to Berlin'*. Democracy was not perfect, Kennedy admitted, '*but we have never had to build a wall to keep our people in*'. The famous '*Ich bin ein Berliner*' line was added at the very last minute, scrawled on his cue cards in his own scratchy handwriting.[8]

Despite his impertinence back in August 1961, Willi Brandt, West Berlin's mayor, shared the platform with the president and received a ringing endorsement; '[Willi Brandt has] *symbolized throughout the world the fighting spirit of West Berlin*', although privately he worried about the impact the speech would have with his East Germans neighbours. General Clay also accompanied Kennedy and still adored in Berlin from his role in the Berlin Airlift, he also got a huge cheer. Later that day, Kennedy delivered another speech at the Free University, which was less memorable but included more substance, and his recognition that the solution to the Berlin question was a long-term project reassured Brandt that West Berlin's future was secure. As if anyone was in any doubt of Kennedy's popularity, an estimated 1.5 million Berliners lined the route taken by his motorcade through the city on the way to the airport.

In just under five months, President John F. Kennedy, who had played such an important part in keeping the world safe and standing up to communist aggression, would be dead, shot by an assassin's bullet in Dallas, Texas.

9

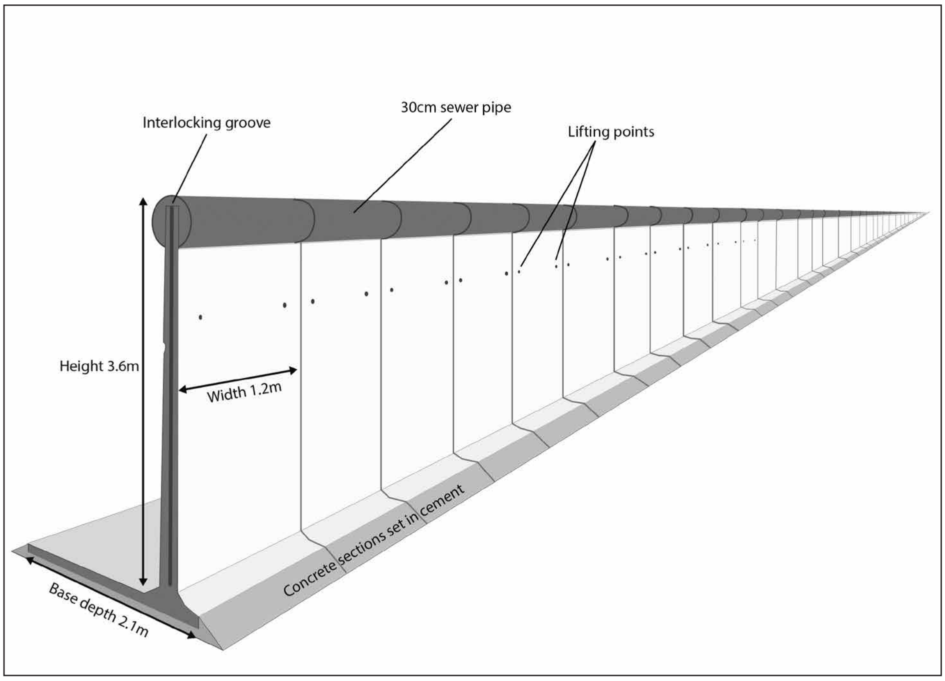
DIE MAUER

The Berlin Wall was never a homogenous design – it slowly evolved from the barbed wire barriers set up on *Stacheldrahtsonntag* (Barbed Wire Sunday, 13 August 1961) to a huge brutalist construction project cutting Berlin in two. Although there were distinct phases of development, it was never fully standardised along the 155km (96 miles) long 'Ring um Berlin', and even when the Wall was being dismantled in 1990, there were still some remaining sections of the original 1961 construction. As described elsewhere in this volume, the Inner German Border had been sealed from 1952 using various types of fencing.

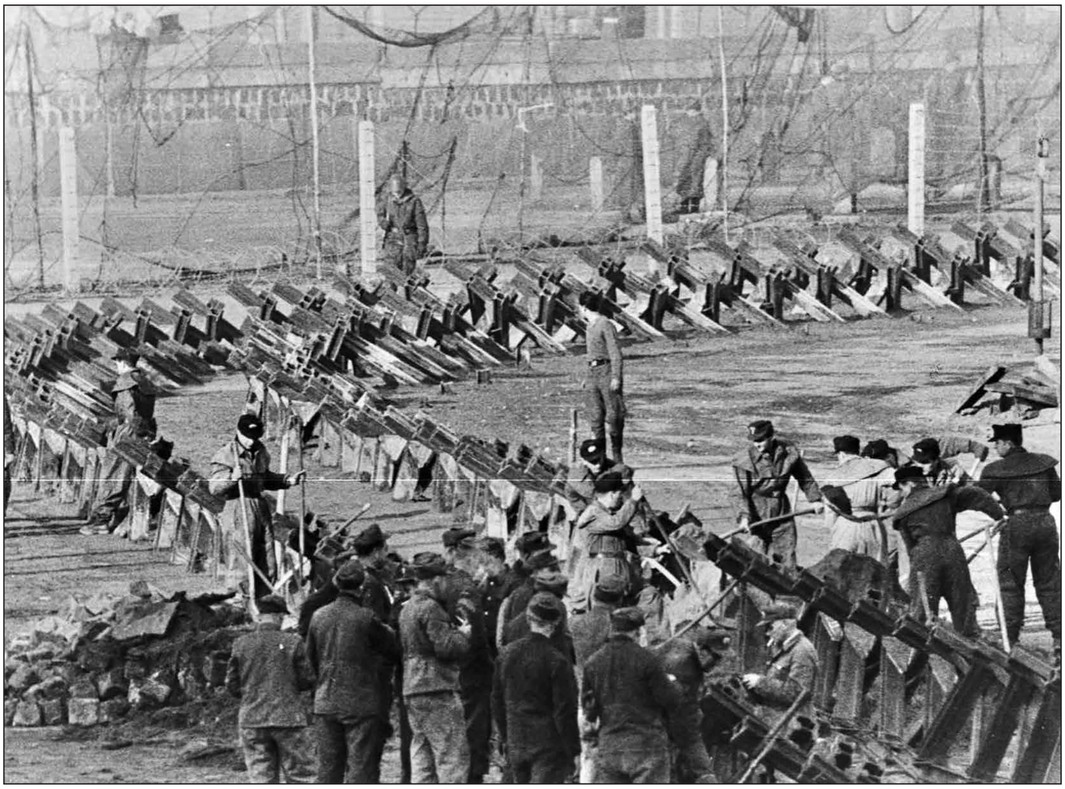
It is possible to group the developments into four generations, although these overlapped each other.

Pre-Wall

West Berlin had been successfully sealed off in the early hours of Sunday 13 August 1961 using mainly barbed wire: either in concertina form attached to wooden trestles or metal posts, or strung in individual strands from concrete posts, set into the ground. In some areas cobbles were lifted, trenches were dug across roads, waterways were grated off and train tracks ripped up. Only when it was clear that Western forces in West Berlin were not going to actively challenge the border closure, could more substantial construction begin.



Grenzwall 75. (George Anderson)



East Germany strengthens its border defences by building two rows of hedgehog tank barriers at Potsdamer Platz in East Berlin, 20 November 1961. (CIA)

An *FDJ* (*Freie Deutsche Jugend*, Free German Youth) work party demolish a house that falls within the 'Death Strip', October 1961. (US National Archives)

Phase 1

In preparation for Operation Rose, large quantities of building materials had been secretly stockpiled in East Berlin, and these were transported to the sector borders by truck. There was, however, no set design for the *Grenzpionieren* to follow, so the first 'Wall' was a hotch-potch of hastily constructed blocks, bricks or concrete slabs, occasionally supported by posts concreted into the ground and sometimes topped by barbed wire or broken glass. It was anything from 1m to 2m tall and around 30cm thick. Speed trumped quality and the early workmanship was poor, with little consideration for aesthetics or laying a suitable foundation. Some intrepid would-be escapees found they could push the Wall over by hand or by driving a vehicle into it, and in places, the Wall collapsed on its own. Photos taken in the immediate aftermath show friends and family conversing over concrete blocks lined up in the street or over low walls, as if they were chatting over a garden fence. These early images give no hint as to what the Wall would become.

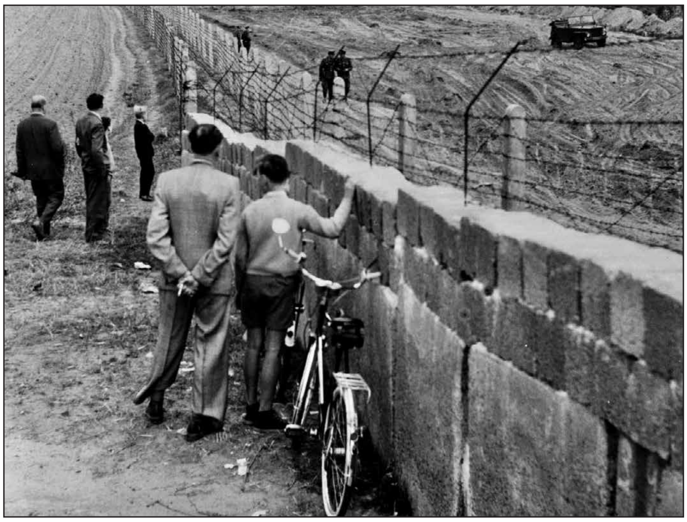
In areas close to roads or on open areas, the *Grenzpionieren* laid out fields of *Stahligeln*, literally 'steel hedgehogs'. These anti-tank barriers or tank traps – *Panzersperre* – were made from sections of railway or tram track, welded together, and weighing half a tonne, stopping all but the heaviest tracked vehicle. They would also slow down pedestrians.

At intervals along the border, wooden observation towers or platforms were built and equipped with searchlights, and various forms of guard posts and bunkers were built out of logs with earth piled up against them.

Phase 2

By June 1962, Ulbricht was now confidant that the West were not going to intervene, so he began Phase 2, the 'industrialisation' of his Wall. Exposed or weak sections of the first generation Wall were reinforced with pre-cast concrete blocks (the ones used to reinforce paths and roadways on the IGB) stacked up and held in place by steel beams. The new construction often took place just inside (east of) the original Wall, allowing the first version to crumble away.

Then, an area of between 30-100m east of the outer Wall was cleared of all vegetation and buildings were demolished to create an empty strip across the city, providing clear fields of sight and fire.



The East Germans are clearing a 100m (330ft) wide 'death' strip inside East German territory along the Blankenfelder Chaussee between Berlin-Lubars (West) and Berlin-Blankenfelde (Soviet sector), October 1961. (US National Archives)

The area was regularly treated with weedkillers and defoliants to kill off any regrowth.

An 'Inner' Wall topped with barbed wire was added parallel to the 'Outer' Wall, with the heavily militarised Security Zone (*Schutzstreifen*) or Death Strip (*Todesstreifen*) between them. This no-man's-land between the inner and outer walls was where the true brutality of the East German regime would be tried, tested and perfected, creating an almost impenetrable set of defences – not to stop foreign invaders, but to stop their own people escaping to start a better life in the West. If the Security Zone was too narrow for further obstacles, large fields of concertina wire were laid, secured to the ground using metal stakes. The 'Inner' or Hinterland Wall was as close as most East Berliners ever got to the actual border with West Berlin. Beyond it was almost certain death, well before a would-be escapee reached the bright lights of the West.

Phase 3

Beginning in 1965, Phase 3 of the Wall development began, with a new design of Outer Wall. This comprised 15cm thick, 1m x 3m panels of pre-cast concrete (*Plattenbauweise*), held in position by vertical steel or concrete 'I' beams. The panels would be stacked three high (four or even five high in some sections) and were topped with the 30cm diameter sewer pipes that would become familiar with later generations of the Wall or with barbed wire. Although this new design was adopted, it would run alongside previous (and later) generations right up until the Wall came down in 1989. Further obstacles were introduced such as the *Flachensperren*, known as 'Stalin's Grass' or 'Stalin's Teeth', which were anti-personnel surface barriers – steel bars laid on the ground with 14cm high metal spikes pointing upwards like a giant bed of nails. Experiments were also made with signalling technology to reduce the workload, and therefore numbers, of the *Grenztruppen*. The Border Signal Fence 74 pioneered some of the technology that would go into the final generation of the Wall.[1]

Phase 4

The fourth generation Wall came from 15 years of experience in keeping the East German population inside East Germany. Beginning in 1976, the *Grenzwall 75* was adopted as the standard Wall design by the East German government and represented the pinnacle in state-of-the-art border defences. It was effectively people- and vehicle-proof and became the design the world associated with the Berlin Wall, primarily from the scenes in 1989 when it was all torn down. While impenetrability had always been the priority, the ever-sensitive East German government fussed about how it should appear to the West (they were far less fastidious about how the Wall appeared to their own citizens). Eric Honecker, who had taken over from Walter Ulbricht in May 1971, insisted that the Wall appeared 'sterile' and 'clean', and visibly aggressive installations like the concrete and steel hedgehogs and Stalin's Teeth were removed and replaced with less visible, but just as deadly obstacles.

Grenzwall 75 was a prefabricated L-shaped modular reinforced concrete wall section (*Stützwandelement*, literally: retaining wall element), standing 2.4m or 3.6m high, 1.2m wide and with a 2.1m deep base.[2] These sections weighed 2,750kg each, and were craned into place using holes formed in the Wall's main faces – the holes were cemented or tarred over afterwards. Alignment was key, so they were positioned on a shallow bed of cement, which allowed for some adjustment and a long groove along the edge of each section locked into a ridge along the edge of the adjoining section for extra stability, rather like tongue and groove timber. In position, the 'foot' only protruded 20cm towards the West, while the rest of the base (the bottom of the 'L') faced East, giving the Wall immense strength. At the base, the Wall was 22cm thick, which tapered up to 12cm at the top. In addition, lengths of rebar (steel reinforcing bar) were left protruding at the top corners, which were then welded together. Sections of 30cm sewer pipe with a 14cm wide lengthwise cut were cemented on top. The pipe sections overlapped the Wall sections for extra strength. In all, 106km of border was converted to *Grenzwall 75*, using over 45,000 sections at a cost of 359 *Ostmarks* each – a huge expense for the cash strapped DDR.[3] One of the Wall's senior commanders famously described his new design as being '*low maintenance and elegantly proportioned*'.

The fourth generation Wall also incorporated new technologies designed to stop *Republikflüchtlinge* before they reached the Control Strip and Outer Wall. Various signalling devices were installed on the Signal Fence, which followed the Outer or Hinterland Wall, or within the *Schutzstreifen* Security Zone. Some were tripwire activated such as the *Signalgerät SP 1*, which were converted from old Soviet bolt-action Karabiner K44 (Mosin-Nagant) rifles and fired a particularly loud blank cartridge when tripped, alerting the nearby guards. The *PSG-80* (*Postensignalgerät*) trip flare was mounted on a tripod and fired a flare into the sky, illuminating a 100m radius area, with a loud bang simultaneously alerting the guards. The *Signalgerät R67* was a more sophisticated device, which illuminated a light in the watch tower, or on a nearby post when triggered, allowing the guards to intervene. They chose not to use the infamous SM-70 automatic firing fragmentation mines as seen on the IGB because of international condemnation and the desire to protect the reputation of the DDR in the harsh glare of the world's media.

The Signal Fence had been developed on the IGB and by the mid-1980s was being put to good use on the Berlin Wall. As well as having tripwires, it also used non-fatal electrical currents, which would form circuits when touched and light up indicators in nearby watch towers, in the *Kommandoturm* or on nearby fence posts. Some would be silent alarms, alerting the *Grenztruppen*, or loud klaxons, alerting everybody in the vicinity. These were designed to deter the would-be escapee before they got into the more dangerous (and more public) Security Zone, allowing the *Grenztruppen* or *Vopos* to intervene before the shooting started. The Inner or Hinterland Wall would made from either be 3-4m high expanded steel mesh as used

The Berlin Wall from East to West

By following the route of a would-be *Republikflüchtling* in the late 1980s, it is possible to sense just how formidable and forbidding the Berlin Wall was.

Approaching the border zone, there would be signs on corners and road junctions making it very clear that those not having legitimate business in the area should turn back. There would be an increased *Vopos* and *FHG* presence and anybody found in this area would be challenged. The *FHG* (*Freiwilliger Helfer der Grenztruppen* or Volunteer Border Force Helpers) was a civilian 'neighbourhood watch' style organisation made up of *SED* members, who were recruited from local factories and businesses, many of them being *NVA* or Grepos reservists. They wore civilian clothes with a green *FHG* armband, or a uniform of dungarees and cap. *FHG* members were tasked with looking out for suspicious individuals, managing traffic around the border zones, guarding factories and important buildings, and were also used as extra resources in search and manhunt operations. They had the authority to stop people, inspect their papers and detain any suspicious individuals in a form of 'citizens' arrest', before handing them over to the *Vopos*. In this task, they were remarkably successful, earning bonuses and prizes, and helped reinforce an overstretched professional border force.

Windows of buildings overlooking the Inner Wall were bricked up, and any East Berliner's homes or businesses remaining in the streets immediately adjacent to the border fortifications were carefully screened and issued special passes, with undesirables being evicted under *Aktion Kornblume* (Operation Cornflower) in 1961. Anybody without a legitimate reason for being there, would be arrested.

The first obstacle for an escapee was the formidable 3m high Inner or Hinterland Wall, which was made from razor sharp expanded steel mesh or solid concrete block topped with barbed wire. Beyond the Inner Wall was the *Schutzstreifen*, the Security Zone or Death Strip (*Todesstreifen*), where intruders were likely to be shot on sight. Being present in this area was a criminal act in itself. The next challenge was the Signal Fence (*Signalzaun*), where various sensors and tripwires would alert the guards if anyone attempted to scale it. The fence was also topped with barbed wire. Beyond it was a relatively open area, filled with various obstacles and overlooked by the watch towers, from which the guards could fire. The obstacles included trip flares, *Flachensperren*, hedgehog anti-vehicle barriers and guard dogs, either tethered to an overhead cable or running free in a fenced off area. Along this section would be various designs of watch towers, which are detailed below.

Freiwilliger Helfer
der Grenztruppen

Armband of the *Freiwilliger Helfer der Grenztruppen* (*FHG*), the East German Volunteer Border Force Helpers. The armband is green with white printed text and a red, black, and gold DDR embroidered emblem in the centre. (Private Collection)

This open section would end with an asphalt patrol road (*Kolonnenweg*) for vehicle patrols and to allow the *Grenztruppen* to quickly reach any incidents. Beyond it was the infamous 6m wide Control or 'Aktion' Strip (*Handlungsstreifen*, sometimes also called the 'Death Strip'), which comprised ploughed and then carefully raked earth. Pioneered on the IGB, this may have only slowed escapees down a little, but it was mainly designed to identify where escape attempts had been made and the number of people involved.

on the IGB, or third generation concrete panel and post, topped with barbed wire.

High Tech Wall 2000

In January 1989, with the world changing all around them, Erich Honecker, oblivious as always, announced that the '*wall will still be standing in 50 or 100 years if the reason for its existence are not removed*'. Plans for the next generation Wall were well underway with project 'High Tech Wall 2000'. This design took advantage of the latest electronic surveillance technologies – much of which was copied or imported from the West – where sensors could track multiple fugitives at once. This 'high tech' approach was meant to ensure escapees were caught well before the final border Wall, thus reducing the need for shooting and all the unwelcome international publicity that brought. A mass of infra-red microwave beams and electronic vibration sensors were to feed into a network of computers which would provide a 'real-time' picture of the integrity of their new 'Electrified Border Fence 90'. Guards were to be equipped with night vision goggles and portable motion detectors. The sensors were specified to detect a human at 3-8m and a vehicle at 40-100m, although the prototypes were struggling with differentiating humans from animals. Developments were hampered by the poor state of the DDR's electronics industry and the high anticipated costs would stretch their finances beyond breaking point. The project to bring the Wall right up to date, in East German terms at least, was still running right up to the fall of the Wall in November 1989.[4]

SECTOR CROSSING POINTS[6]

The number and type of crossing points between West and East Berlin changed in line with the political atmosphere between East and West, however, once things had settled down, a total of 16 checkpoints were used, each with fortified barriers and associated infrastructure, detailed below in clockwise order from Bornholmer Straße.

1. Bornholmer Straße (SKG)

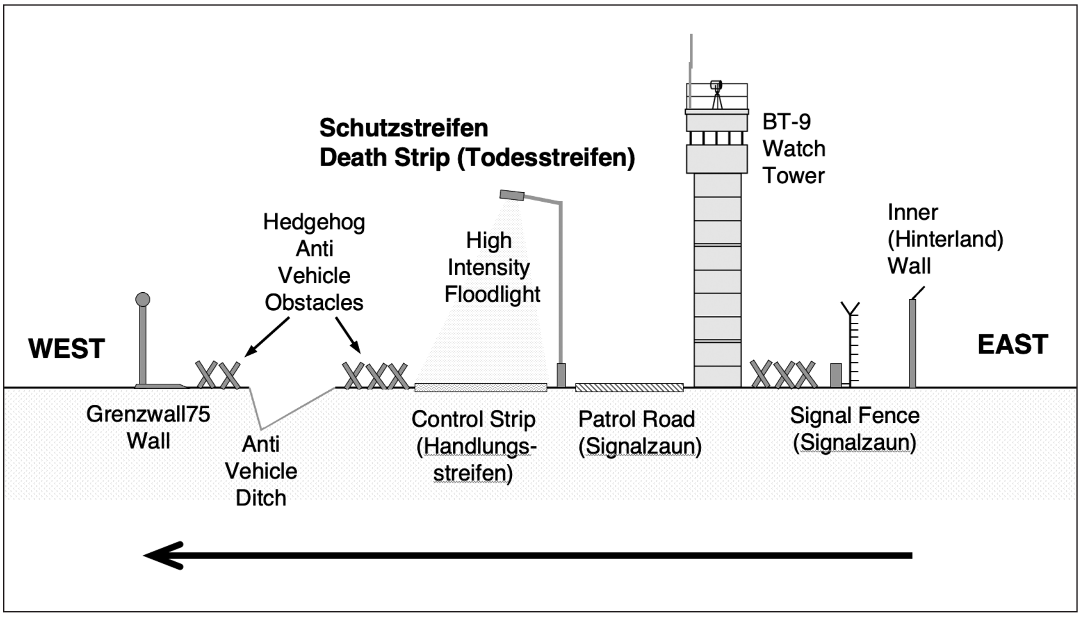
Bornholmer Straße (Bösebrücke, Malmöer Straße) was located at the southeast corner of the French sector, serving the citizens of

The strip was in full view of the watch towers and illuminated by high-intensity floodlights (*Beleuch-tungsanlage*) on tall poles illuminating the Control Strip and patrol road. These would be lit from dusk to dawn, creating an eerie halo along the border. They were supplemented with powerful searchlights (*Suchscheinwerfer*) positioned on top of the watch towers.

The next major test was the anti-vehicle ditch (*Kraftfahrzeug Sperrgraben*), which was dug along any sections of the Wall which were vulnerable to vehicular escape. These were also used on the IGB and were formidable obstacles, too wide to jump and too deep to exit at speed. It was likely that there were additional 'Hedgehogs' around this ditch.

The final hurdle was the 2.4m or 3.6m high smooth concrete *Grenzwall 75*, with no hand or foot holds. It was painted white so any escapees would show up better against it, and with the area being flood-lit, there were no shadows in which to hide. The rounded sewer pipe sections on top were designed to prevent a grappling hook latching onto the top.

The 'Outer' Wall was always a metre or so *inside* the actual border. This policy was introduced at Khrushchev's insistence in 1961 to ensure no West Berlin territory was violated and the West therefore had no reason or excuse to retaliate. Over time, the Western side of the Wall needed maintaining, so the East German authorities came up with a novel solution – they built little doors into their impregnable Wall, through which *Grenzpionieren* could climb (watched all the time by heavily armed *Grenztruppen*), do their work while remaining technically *inside* East German territory and then return through the door, which was closed and locked behind them – a rather incongruous but pragmatic solution. Each door required two keys, which were kept by different guards to minimise the risk of their colleagues escaping through them. The plan was to paint the West side of the wall white too, but the East Germans authorities quickly gave up after losing the battle to West Berlin's numerous graffiti artists. The DDR government's protests over the graffiti fell on deaf ears in the West Berlin Senat. West Berliners treated this metre or so of East German territory next to the Wall as if it was simply part of the pavement.


Schutzstreifen
Death Strip (Todesstreifen)
BT-9 Watch Tower
Inner (Hinterland) Wall
Hedgehog Anti Vehicle Obstacles
High Intensity Floodlight
WEST
EAST
Grenzwall75 Wall
Anti Vehicle Ditch
Control Strip (Handlungs-streifen)
Patrol Road (Signalzaun)
Signal Fence (Signalzaun)

The components of the Berlin Wall fortifications, from West to East, c.1980. (Author)

West Berlin and the FRG. It stretched from Bösebrücke railway bridge to Malmöer Straße in the East. This border crossing was the first to be breached after the fall of the Wall after 'people-power' forced the East German border guards to open the border.

2. Chausseestraße (SKG)

Chausseestraße was a low-profile border crossing in the French sector, serving West Berlin citizens only, and was located at the intersection of Chausseestraße and Liesenstraße.

3. Invalidenstraße (SKG)

Invalidenstraße was a border crossing for West Berlin citizens located at the Sandkrugbrücke bridge over the Berlin-Spandau Shipping Canal (Spandauer Schifffahrtskanal) in the British sector. Numerous escape attempts took place here, including that of Günter Litfin, who was shot dead by East German border guards. A memorial stone was erected to commemorate him.

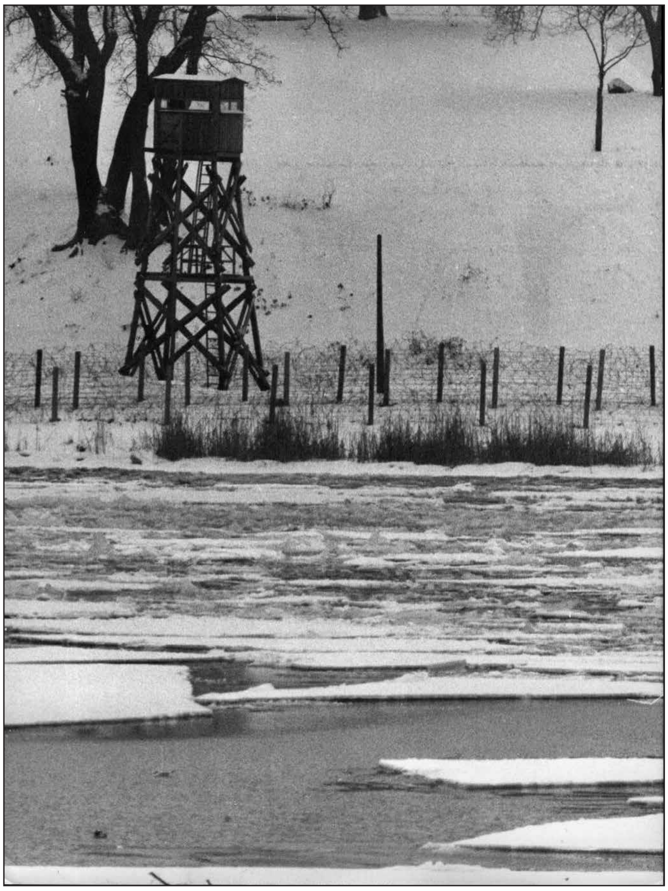
4. Bahnhof Friedrichstraße (STG)

Friedrichstraße station was an important travel hub between the West Berlin sectors, despite it being located entirely in the Soviet-occupied West Berlin. Its underground facilities were only open to West Berlin travellers who were transferring between the railway, U-Bahn and S-Bahn lines, or to access the border crossing in the specially built 'Terminal Hall'. It became known as the '*Tränenpalast*' or 'Palace of Tears' because of the many tearful farewells between friends and relatives that took place there.

5. Checkpoint Charlie (Friedrichstraße) (SKG)

Checkpoint Charlie on Friedrichstraße in the American sector was the highest profile crossing between East and West Berlin and was the only designated crossing for foreigners, diplomats and Allied forces. Many notable historical incidents took place here, including the intense standoff between Soviet and US tanks in October 1961, and the fatal escape attempt by Peter Fechter in August 1962. It is also featured in many Cold War era spy movies and books.

Berlin Wall and IGB Watch Towers



Wooden watch tower near to the Glienicke Bridge. (US National Archives)

All along the Inner German Border and Berlin Wall there was a chain of watch towers overlooking the fortifications. As with all the border infrastructure, it was primarily there to stop people leaving the country rather than entering, but these high towers also gave the *Grenztruppen* the ability to observe what was going on in the West, a valuable source of intelligence. To start with, the towers were limited to high traffic areas and were made from locally sourced wood. They consisted of a square wooden hut with windows on each side, held up on timber legs and the *Grenzpolizist* had to climb up on a ladder and enter through a hatch in the floor. Some were fitted with a gantry around the outside.

As the border became more industrialised, a new generation of prefabricated concrete towers were introduced, creating more permanent and durable installations, and the Berlin Wall planners were able to factor in lessons learned during the previous eight or so years of IGB development.

The first semi-permanent tower design was the BT-11 (*Beobachtungtrum* 11-metre), known to the *Grenztruppen* as the *Rundblickbeobachtungsturm* or RBT. These were introduced in 1969 and were constructed using eleven sections of 1m high x 1m diameter interlocking concrete pipe set on a concrete foundation using a crane. At the base there was a door, and an internal ladder took the guards up to an octagonal concrete observation platform. The platform had opening windows on all eight sides (which could be used to fire from), plus firing ports in the lower parts of the walls – the *Grenztruppen* having their personal weapons with them (MPiK or MPiKM assault rifles, East German versions of the Soviet AK-47 or AKM, which were both accurate and powerful). Inside the platform there was a powerful fixed pair of binoculars (as well as several pairs of handheld binoculars), a rifle rack, heating, emergency equipment and a variety of communication equipment.[5] Painted on the insides of the eight segments were the points and degrees of the compass to enable the direction of an incident to be ascertained immediately. Guards stationed in towers situated close to high-profile or sensitive sections of the border also had cameras with telephoto lenses. On the roof, there was a 30cm 1,000w searchlight (*Suchscheinwerfer*), that could be directed from inside the platform. The platform was connected to power and telephone, allowing a more coordinated approach to policing the border. In theory, the whole tower could be dismantled and relocated, although this seldom happened, and it was also possible to vary the height to suit the topography by removing a section of the tower column. However, typical East German workmanship meant that the top-heavy towers were unstable in high winds and suffered badly with poor foundations, with many collapsing.

By the mid-1970s, an improved tower was introduced, solving many of the issues with the BT-11. The BT-9 used 2m x 2m square sections of prefabricated concrete, making the whole structure more stable. The base section was 2m high, and included a door, and then six 1-metre interlocking sections were stacked on the base. One of the sections close to the top had firing ports on each side. At the top, there was a 2.3m x 2.3m x 2m high observation platform with opening windows all round, and a similar searchlight installation on the roof.

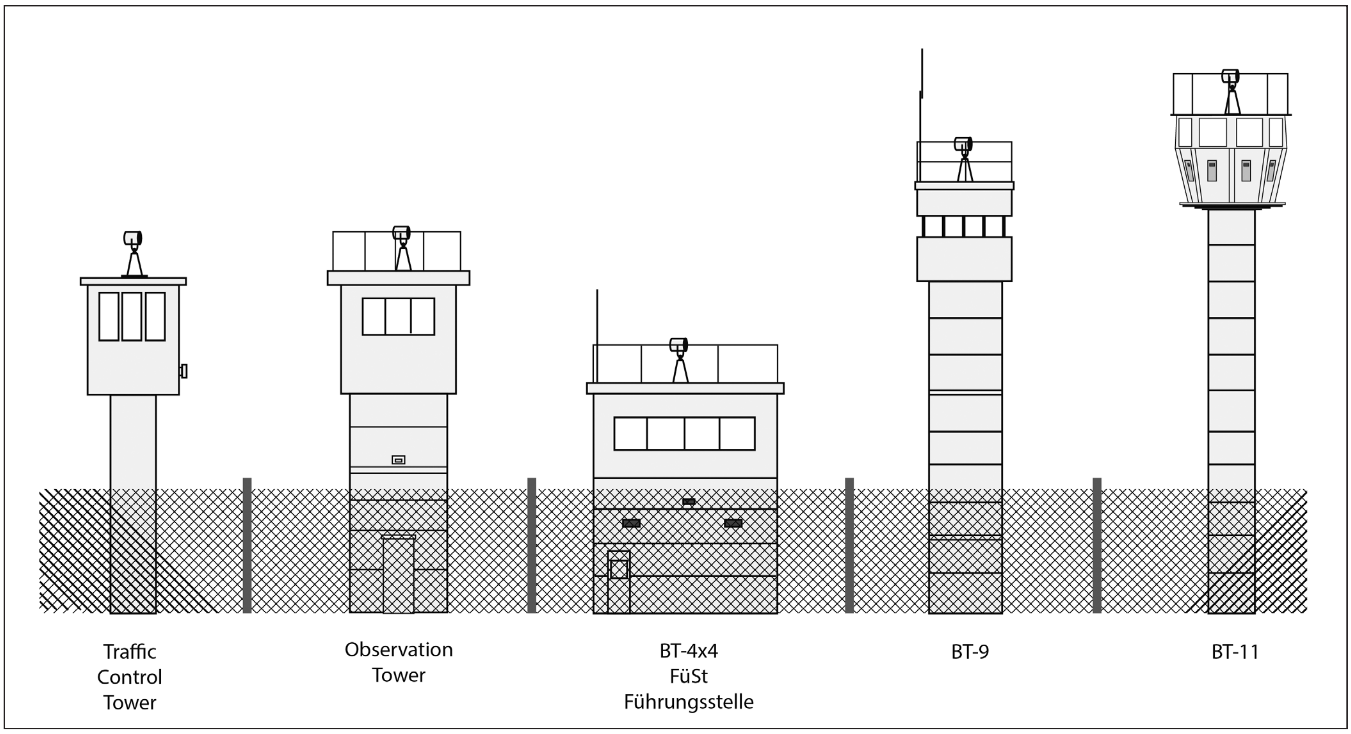
The third type of structure was a Command-and-Control tower (BT 4x4, *FüSt*, *Führungsstelle* or *Kommandoturm*), necessary as the fortifications became more integrated, with improved communications and numerous sensors and tripwires. It was built in a similar way to the BT-9, with four 4m x 4m x 1m high square sections of prefabricated concrete, with a 2m high platform on top, giving an overall height of 6m. It had windows at the top and

6. Heinrich-Heine-Straße (Checkpoint Delta) (SKG)

This was a border crossing between Heinrich-Heine-Straße in the Russian sector and Prinzenstraße in the American sector for use by citizens of the FRG. The nearby Heinrich-Heine-Straße U-Bahn station in East Berlin was closed and skipped by trains during the Wall years. This was sometimes erroneously referred to as Checkpoint Delta.

7. Oberbaumbrücke (Warschauer Straße) (SKG)

Crossing the River Spree, the iconic double-decker bridge is well-known Berlin landmark, linking the boroughs of Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg. The lower deck is a road linking Warschauer Straße in the East with Oberbaum Straße in the American sector, with a U-Bahn route on the upper deck, but during the Wall years, it was a pedestrian border crossing for West Berliners. The entire width of the river here was in East Berlin, which meant that in May 1975, West Berliners were not allowed to intervene to save the life of Çetin Mert,



Berlin Wall and IGB Watch Towers. (George Anderson)

various firing ports, plus the usual searchlight. Inside, however, it contained communication equipment to keep in contact with the individual watch towers and sector HQ, controls to open and close automatic gates and operate the flood and search lights, indicator panels to monitor the various tripwires, mines, and sensors. There was space inside for cells, sleeping/cooking areas and a small office. These command towers maintained regular telephone contact with their counterparts on the other side of the border, to avoid any misunderstandings escalating into full-blown border incidents – an unusual example of East/West cooperation.

In addition, there were several 'Special Purpose' tower designs that were unique to the Berlin Wall. A new 'Standard Observation Tower' was designed to be simpler, cheaper, and more stable than the BT-11. It was made by piling six 1m high interlocking sections of 1.8m x 1.8m square prefabricated concrete on top of each other, with a sheet metal observation platform on top. Guards could fire down through window in the platform and through ports in the penultimate concrete section, and in addition there was a searchlight on top.

Another variant of 'Special Purpose' tower could be found next to railways and autobahns. The Traffic Control Tower had a thinner column with a concrete panel observation cabin and searchlight on top. These had loudspeakers on the side for the guards to communicate with people on the ground.

The final type of tower was not used in Berlin but could be seen along the IGB. The *A-Turm* (AT, A-Tower) was a 25m high green painted block tower, with a flat roof covered in a variety of aerials and antennae. They were built in the 1950s as part of a national military and government communications network, but SIGINT interception by NATO and the *Bundeswehr* limited their use. After reunification, most of the towers were repurposed as civilian mobile telephony and communications stations.

There were other structures that were localised and generally non-standard. These included ground level concrete bunkers, sometimes partially buried in the ground, and raised wooden observation platforms, to improve the view over a specific section of border.

In West Berlin, the city authorities built wooden platforms at key vantage points along the Wall so people could peer over and look into the East. These were popular with tourists (including President Kennedy in 1963) and the Western media, but also allowed West Berliners a glimpse into the other world across in the East, in the vain hope that they would see their relatives. In the East, however, once the 'industrialisation' of the Wall began, the average East Berliner would not be allowed anywhere near it.

the 5-year-old son of a West Berlin Turkish *Gastarbeiter* (foreign 'guest' worker), who fell into the water and subsequently drowned.

8. Sonnenallee (Südostallee) (SKG)

This was one of the quieter border crossings for West Berlin citizens between the American and Soviet sectors. It is today marked by a memorial to Chris Gueffroy, killed on 5 February 1989, the last East German to be shot and killed while trying to escape.

9. Waltersdorfer Chaussee (STG)

The crossing point at Waltersdorfer Chaussee in Rudow in the American sector gave West Berliners and foreigners bus transfer access to East Berlin's civilian airport at Schönefeld.

10. Checkpoint Bravo (Dreilinden-Drewitz) (STG)

Western travellers crossing the DDR from Helmstedt (Checkpoint Alpha) on the A 2 autobahn (now the A 115) would arrive at a substantial border installation at the southwest corner of Berlin. They had to endure long queues and two separate checkpoints:

intense scrutiny, lengthy interrogations and searches from the Grenztruppen at the first checkpoint at Drewitz, and further passport checks by West Berlin Police at the actual border crossing at Dreilinden into the American sector, which was known by the Allies as Checkpoint Bravo.[7] During the 1970s, cars were even X-rayed to look for potential escapees.

11. Griebnitzsee (Neubabelsberg, Wannsee) (STG)

Griebnitzee was one of two main rail intersections/border crossings for trains transiting the DDR to West Berlin (American sector). Located in Potsdam in the southwest corner of the city (and next to the Steinstücken enclave) Griebnitzee was a complex maze of rail tracks, sidings, platforms and checkpoints. Berlin-Wannsee/Griebnitzsee was the passenger terminal, while Steinstücken/Drewitz Station was for freight.

12. Glienicker Brücke (STG)

The Glienicke Bridge spans the Havel River, connecting Königstraße running through the Duppeler Forest in Wannsee, in the American sector, with Berlinerstraße in the Brandenburg capital, Potsdam, in the DDR. The East German authorities closed the bridge to West Berliners on 27 May 1952, and it was closed to East Berliners after construction of the Berlin Wall. It was, however, the point of entry for the Allied Military Liaison Missions into the DDR and was also used for several spy swaps, earning it the moniker 'Bridge of Spies'.

13. Heerstraße (STG)

Heerstraße was a road checkpoint for non-autobahn traffic at the west side of the city in the British sector, close to the British Military Headquarters at the Olympic Stadium complex.

14. Staaken (Spandau) (STG)

Staaken, on the west of the city and in the British sector, was the second rail crossing point into the city for trains transiting the DDR. In December 1961, the area became famous for one of the most dramatic escape attempts, where East German train driver Harry Deterling smashed his steam train through the barrier to reach West Berlin. Apart from Harry and his fireman, there were 32 passengers on the train – 25 opted to stay in the West (Deterling's friends and family), while seven voluntarily returned to East Berlin. The train was towed back to the East by a DDR locomotive. The old crossing was closed immediately afterwards, the rails were pulled up and more substantial barriers were constructed. In the 1970s a more secure crossing point was built and instead of barriers, massive sliding gates secured the transit corridor, which led to the crossing being nicknamed the 'Elephant Gate' (*Elefantentor*).

15. Stolpe (Heiligensee) (STG)

In the early 1980s, a new autobahn was built (A 111, paid for by West Germany) to link West Berlin with northern Germany and Scandinavia. It terminated at the border checkpoint at Stolpe/Heiligensee in the French sector.[8]

SKG = *Sektorgrenze* (Sector Border)
STG = *Stadtgrenze* (City/State Border)

The cynically named *Antifaschistischer Schutzwall* (Anti-Fascist Protection Barrier) was a horrific piece of military and not-so-civil engineering, and escapes across the modernised Wall sections reduced to almost nothing by the late 1970s and into the 1980s, with successful escapees exploiting the ever-decreasing points of vulnerability around rivers, canals, junctions and crossings. The Wall's statistics in 1989, as shown in Table 4, were daunting.

Table 4: The Wall in 1989[9]

Berlin Wall Statistics	
Inner German Border	1,381km
Total ring around West Berlin	155km
Outer ring (*Stadtgrenze*, *Ring um Berlin*)	111.9km
Inner city border (*Sektorgrenze*) *	43.1km
Outer Wall **	162km
Grenzwall 75	106km
Anti-vehicle ditches	124.5km
Hedgehog anti-vehicle barriers	19km
Control strips	165km
Patrol roads	172 km
Floodlights	166km
Guard towers	302
Observation bunkers	20
Dog runs	259
Signal Fencing	127.5km
Hinterland outer fences (not covered by above)	68km

* *Innerstädtische Grenze Berlin*
** Allowing for additional fortifications around crossing points

10

A BID FOR FREEDOM

The Berlin Wall was a political device to lock a population inside their own country, in many cases, against their will. It was effectively a giant prison, and as with any prison, there would be individuals that would try to escape. While the construction of the Wall in 1961 radically reduced the number of *Republikflüchtlinge*, attempts to escape continued almost to the fall of the Wall in 1989. Some succeeded, but many perished in the process – the Berlin Wall fatalities are considered later in this chapter.

There were some extraordinary feats of ingenuity and nerve, against a very formidable foe. The East German border force, the *Grenztruppen*, were indoctrinated to see escapees as traitors to the Republic, as criminals, as spies and terrorists, and the minefields and infamous *Schießbefehl* shoot-to-kill order ensured that there was a good chance that an escapee would die in the process. If arrested, the escapee and their family would pay a high price, with long prison sentences, officially sanctioned discrimination for family members and in some cases, execution. The *Grepos* would also carefully analyse each escape attempt, successful or not, to learn from mistakes made or identify weaknesses in the system. Therefore, with every escape, the very act of escaping became more difficult.

In the early days, when the Wall was incomplete, there was a steady stream of defectors finding their way through ruins, backyards close to the Wall and even by swimming rivers or canals. The British installed swimming pool style steps on the banks of the canals in their sector to help swimmers climb out after an exhausting swim. Some would seize the opportunity as it presented itself, for example, several 'volunteers' working in Wall construction parties stepped over their work and fled to the West. There was also much civil unrest in West Berlin at the time, which created diversions for would-be escapees – on 27 October 1961, for example, a large group of West German youths had to be broken up by a sizeable force of West German police as they tried to tear up a section of the barbed wire in the French sector, and 22 East Berliners took advantage of the disturbance to escape to the West. While trying to avoid direct involvement, the West Berlin Police inevitably got caught up with helping escapees, including providing covering fire or laying a curtain of tear gas or smoke. They would claim that the East fired first, and it was often impossible to prove otherwise. In May 1962, a 15-year-old boy was intercepted while trying to swim across the Spandau Canal to the British sector. He was fired on by East German border guards and was hit several times, with more shots hitting the West Berlin canal bank. West Berlin Police returned fire and the boy was pulled from the canal alive, although in the firefight, Peter Göring, a 21-year-old East German *Grenzsoldaten* was killed. By the end of the first year with the Wall in place, according to *Stasi* figures, 3,041 people were arrested trying to escape:

Table 5: Arrests following escape attempts August 1961 – August 1962

Method	Number	%
On foot	2,221	73%
By train	335	11%
By vehicle	244	8%
By sea (via the Baltic Sea)	114	4%
By swimming	96	3%
Via the sewers	31	1%

Escapes were generally small-time operations, with ones and twos exploiting a perceived weakness or gap, however, some escapes were from more organised groups created from idealistic beginnings (often led by students), while others were more commercial (such as those organised by Wolfgang Fuchs, the so-called 'Tunnel Fox') or even criminal enterprises.[1] It is not generally acknowledged, but the West Berlin Senat also funded escape operations, albeit through intermediaries. Wealthy patrons or philanthropic organisations in the West would sometimes provide funding, and the media got involved. Media coverage was a double-edged sword – it secured funding and raised awareness of the plight of East German citizens, but also risked revealing too much to the *Grepos*.

To counter the efforts made by the *Stasi* to expose escape plans, the escape organisations had to become increasingly professional, utilising a wide range of tradecraft and ingenuity including forging papers and making use of a global network of contacts, such as acquiring blank passports from foreign embassies.

As over-ground escapes became more dangerous, tunnelling became one of the only options, especially for large numbers of people, or those not capable of the athleticism needed to climb fences, such as young children or the elderly. Berlin's sandy soil was easy to dig but needed a lot of structural support, with a real risk of being buried alive, or alerting the *Grepos* if the ground subsided following a collapse. Tunnellers would take advantage of derelict buildings either side of the Wall, where their cellars would provide cover for tunnel entrances.

Most tunnel projects failed due to poorly camouflaged entrances or betrayal within the tunnelling group, and tunnellers began to arm themselves in case they needed to shoot their way out. The *Vopos* and *Stasi* used detection techniques such as using listening devices, just like those used to foil escape attempts tunnels from the Second World War prisoner of war camps. Penalties for DDR citizens caught assisting escapers were stiff.

The first tunnel success was on 24 January 1962, when 28 people escaped through a tunnel under Oranienburger Chaussee. A further group of 12 mainly elderly people escaped through another tunnel close-by on 5 May 1962.

The involvement of Western media is controversial given the risks involved. Axel Springer's publishing empire and magazines like *Stern* provided generous funding and would produce large features on successful escape attempts. The most high-profile tunnel project was funded (and filmed) by the American broadcaster, *NBC*. They paid 50,000DM ($12,500 then and around $150,000 now) to a group of tunnel builders in exchange for the exclusive film rights. The project began on 9 May 1962 from a base in a derelict factory building at 73 Bernauer Straße in the West towards a basement 100 yards or so into the East. With such funding, it turned into a very professional operation, with food and all the tools provided, piped-in air, electric lighting, a telephone system to communicate with the digging face, and even an underground rest and dining area. The 150m (492ft) tunnel was completed on 14 September and took 12 minutes to crawl through, with the constant fear of collapse or discovery. Twenty-nine East Germans managed to escape before it filled with water and had to be abandoned, and it therefore became known as Tunnel 29. The film was due to be aired on *NBC* in the United States on 31 October 1962, but the State Department insisted on delaying it to avoid heightening tensions caused by the Cuban missile crisis. It eventually aired on 10 December and was a fascinating documentary, ethics aside.

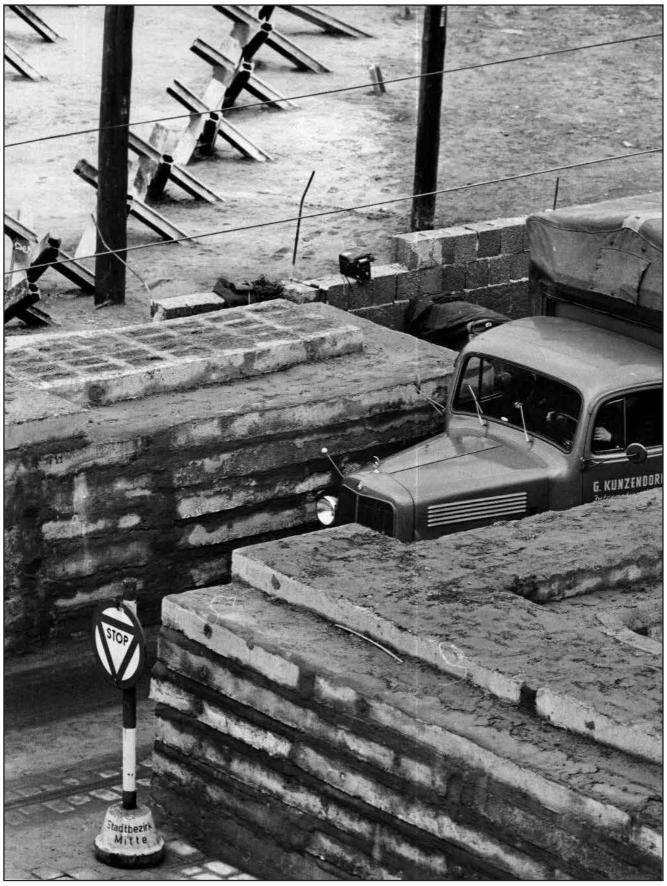
Another large-scale tunnel project, Tunnel 57, was organised by Wolfgang Fuchs, the Tunnel Fox, again with media sponsorship and the services of a mining engineer to ensure it was properly constructed. They began in Spring 1964 on Bernauer Straße once again, and 7 months and 150m later emerged in the bathroom of a housing block in the East. Over three nights from 3 to 5 October 1964, 57 people escaped but on the final night, the operation was betrayed, and there was an underground fire fight with the *Grepos* in which one of the East German guards, Egon Schultz, was killed. By the end of 1964, the opportunities for tunnelling had all but disappeared, and alternative means of escape were sought.

Escaping was not for everybody, with the physical exertion sometimes needed and the terrible risk involved. East Germans, and perhaps Germans in general, were conditioned to play by the rules and follow the correct procedures, and so some citizens actually applied for permission to leave the country officially. In the eyes of the state, this was an unforgiveable sin, expressing a desire by the

Successful Escapes

Some of the most successful escapes relied on ingenuity and were particularly brazen:

- Three East Berliners crashed their truck through the barrier at Bouchéstraße, sprinting over the final few metres after the truck got wedged on a high bollard, and running to freedom.
- An Austrian was able to smuggle his East German girlfriend and her mother through Checkpoint Charlie by driving a low sports car under the lowered barrier, speeding into the West before the border guards realised what was happening.
- In May 1963, an East German was smuggled out to the West hiding in a BMW Isetta bubble car. The tiny vehicle was only 140cm (55") wide and 229cm (90") long and had been specially modified. Over the next year, a further nine people were smuggled out in a similar way until vehicle searches, including X-rays, at the border became more rigorous.[1]
- In April 1963, a group of soldiers broke through the Wall in an armoured personnel carrier and escaped.
- June 1962, 13 young East Berliners staged a daring escape by stealing the river pleasure steamer *Friedrich Wolf* from the Treptow landing stage in East Berlin. Having incapacitated the captain and engineer with copious amounts of alcohol and locked them in a cabin, the conspirators set off, bluffing their way past a patrol boat using the boat's permit to navigate the border waterways, before heading at full speed into the Landwehr Canal and to West Berlin. All pleasure boats were subsequently guarded at night with their steering wheels removed.
- Accredited diplomats from countries friendly with the DDR could be 'hired' to take escapees across in the boots of their diplomatic cars.
- July 1965, an East German family escaped over the Wall using a zip-wire. They hid in a toilet in the House of Ministries on Wilhelmstraße next to the Wall, and when it was dark, threw a weighted fishing line over the Wall which was intercepted by some family members in the West. This was attached to a steel cable, which was pulled back over the Wall and secured around a flagpole, and the family escaped one-by-one by strapping themselves to a pulley suspended on the cable. The cable was not discovered by the East Germans until the following morning, despite the whole operation being witnessed by a squad of Soviet soldiers who were guarding the building. They did not intervene because they assumed it was the *Stasi* at work, smuggling agents into the West.
- In 1979 two East German families, four adults and four children, flew from Thuringia to Bavaria using a home-made hot-air balloon. Following their escape, sales of vinyl sheeting and tent fabric, like that used to make the balloon, were severely restricted. Their story is told in the excellent 2018 German language film *Balloon*.



A truck gets wedged between the reinforced barricades at the Prinzen-Heinrich-Heine-Straße border crossing in an escape attempt, 5 December 1961. (CIA)

individual to turn their back on the Workers' and Peasants' State, the communist utopia, and harbouring 'an attitude of rejection to the state'. From the day an application was submitted, the applicant was marked by the *Stasi* and could expect to see the state turn its back on them. Those few who were accepted had their citizenship revoked, papers seized and were often only given a few days' notice to quit. If those accepted could not get their affairs in order by the deadline, they would be arrested for being in the country illegally and sent to jail.

Fatalities

The Berlin Wall was surrounded by tragedy, no more so than the 327 people who lost their lives at, or because of, the Wall. The actual number of deaths is disputed, being caught up in state secrecy and deliberate obfuscation and suppression by the *Stasi*. The Free University of Berlin (*Freien Universität Berlin*) appears to have undertaken the most comprehensive study, closely reviewing 1,492 deaths at the Berlin Wall or IGB between the founding of the DDR in 1949 and the fall of the Wall in 1989.[2] The researchers dug deep in the Federal and State Archives, what remained of the *Stasi* archives, records of the Berlin Public Prosecutor's Office and the Central Assessment Group for Governmental and Organized Crimes (*Zentralen Ermittlungsstelle Regierungs- und Vereinigungskriminalität* or *ZERV*).[3] The project benefited from extensive criminal investigations undertaken post-1989 into border killings. In their 2017 report, the 1,492 possible cases were reduced to 327 which could be conclusively linked to the Wall, as shown in Table 6.

The figures in Table 6 disguise 327 individual tragedies. The first victim of the Wall was 24-year-old tailor Günter Litfin, who was shot and killed by a *Trapo* while trying to swim over the Humbolthafen to the British sector. This was on 24 August 1961, just two days after the *Schießbefehl* was issued. By the end of October 1961, 15 people had been killed on the border.[4] The last person to be shot at the Wall was 21-year-old Chris Gueffroy, who was killed on 5 February 1989 having approached the border on the mistaken assumption that the *Schießbefehl* had been lifted. He made it to the final hurdle, before being shot dead in cold blood by a border guard. Gueffroy does not hold the dubious accolade for the last actual death at the Wall, however. That goes to Winfried Freudenberg, who perished after falling from his makeshift hot-air balloon on 8 March 1989 while trying to fly over to the West. The youngest victim was a six-month-old baby, who suffocated in July 1977 in the boot of an escape vehicle. The oldest victim was an 81-year-old farmer from the Lower Saxony district of Lüchow-Dannenberg, who accidentally fell into a minefield in June 1967, and bled out in full view of the nearby border guards.

A look at the demographics of those killed illustrates the very problem the East German government was facing. Almost 40 percent of them were skilled workers, 20 percent unskilled, and there was a smattering of academics, doctors and medical staff. Forty-four and a half percent were between the ages of 18 and 25, and 31.8 percent were between the ages of 25 and 35 – all people the DDR could not afford to lose. Ninety percent of those killed were male.

The study did not include the estimated 200 people who died fleeing across the Baltic Sea, or as many as 200 who were killed trying to cross the borders of other Communist Bloc states.

The way the authorities handled the deaths was indicative of the callousness and moral bankruptcy of the *SED*'s regime in East Germany, and institutionalised cruelty compounded the grief of losing a loved one from moment of the incident. The first priority for the regime was to conceal the fact that someone had been killed, preferably before the news reached West Berlin and the international media. The East Germans were very sensitive about their international reputation and tried to present the appearance of a worker's paradise, so to have to kill one of its own population while trying to flee from that 'paradise' was embarrassing, to say the least.

The death of Peter Fechter on 17 August 1962 was an example of just how bad it could go for the East Germans. Four days after the first anniversary of the Wall being erected, at around 1415, Fechter and a friend made their escape from an old building on the corner of Zimmerstraße and Markgrafenstraße, roughly halfway between Checkpoint Charlie and the Springer Building. His friend managed to get over the final breezeblock and barbed wire wall, but Fechter

Table 6: Berlin Wall and IGB Fatalities	
Fatalities	
327	**Total Fatalities**
238	**Fatalities in the border area**
114	Refugees (*Flüchtlinge*)
42	Non-refugee deaths from firearms, mines or accidents in border area or border fortifications
31	Cross-border commuters (*Grenzgänger* or 'Border Jumpers') shot by Border Police
24	DDR border troops shot, triggered mines, drowned or committed suicide after their attempt to escape had failed
11	Suicides, after arrests in the border area
6	Suicides, in connection with forced relocations from the border area
5	Refugees, who went missing after attempting to escape across waterways next to the border
3	Soviet Army deserters, shot in the border area
2	West German customs officers, shot by DDR Border Police officers
24	**DDR border troops killed in the line of duty**
9	Border guards, shot by deserters
8	Border guards, shot while trying to escape
3	Border guards, shot by armed civilians
3	Border Police officers, shot by patrols of the US armed forces
1	Border guard, shot by Federal Border Guard (*BGS*) officers
21	**Deaths connected with the DDR border regime**
8	Executed former DDR Border Police officers
6	People shot by Soviet, *ČSSR* or *NVA* deserters *
2	People shot dead while deserting towards the border area
2	People's Police officers, killed in the run-up to attempted escapes
2	Civilians arrested in the border area and later executed in Moscow
1	Civilian shot by a drunken border soldier
1	Suicide in hospital after being injured by a mine
1	Customs officer executed in Moscow
44	**Suicides of Border Police officers and Border Soldiers**

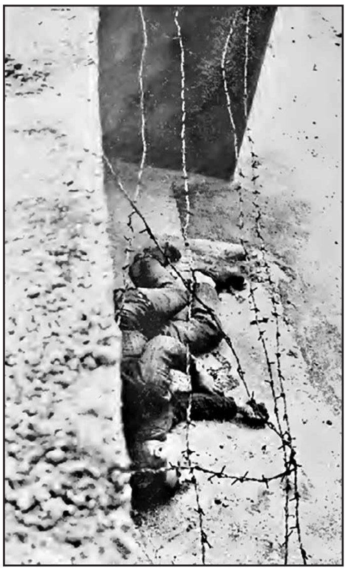
was hit several times by shots fired by the East German border guards (35 shots were fired in total, from four different guards). Being so close to Checkpoint Charlie, passers-by, US troops and the Western media were alerted by the gunfire and a crowd quickly formed on the Western side. What made this episode so horrifying was that Fechter was left to slowly bleed out in great pain and in full view of this audience, with his cries for help audible on both sides of the Wall. US troops from the Allied checkpoint tried to distract the *Grenztruppen* with smoke grenades to allow a rescue, but not being allowed to climb over the Wall, the best help they could offer was to throw over their first aid kits. The West Berlin Police were equally impotent. The crowd on the West side got increasingly angry and loud, just as Fechter's cries for help were getting weaker. After almost an hour, under cover of a barrage of tear gas grenades, several *Grepos* and *Vopos* approached Fechter's now lifeless body, wrapped him in a blanket and carried him back into the East. As Fechter was driven away in a police car, the angry cries of 'murderers' could be heard, and the exchange of tear gas grenades continued until early evening when the crowd was finally dispersed by West Berlin Police.[5] There was quite a backlash aimed at the US soldiers and West Berlin Police who failed to intervene, but the truth was that they were effectively powerless – to cross into DDR territory would have provoked an international diplomatic and possibly military incident. The blame clearly lay with the shooters, and the 45 minutes they took to reach the victim. Although the *Grenztruppen* after-action-report called Fechter a 'criminal', blamed Western provocation for the wider incident and announced awards for the four soldiers involved, the situation could not have been worse for Walter Ulbricht's *SED*, with pictures of Fechter's corpse being carried away hitting the front pages of newspapers across the Free World. *The New York Times*' frontpage article on Saturday 18 August 1962 had the headline '*German Reds Shoot Fleeing Youth, Let him Die at Wall*'. London's *The Times* headed its Overseas News section with the more restrained headline '*E. German Shot in Climbing the Wall – Companion Reaches Safety*' but had a photo of West Berlin Police climbing the Wall to attempt to render first aid to the youth.

The whole situation of border shootings needed to be efficiently managed and suppressed, and this was dealt with by the East German Security Service, the *Stasi*. From the minute the shot was fired, the corpse became property of the *MfS* and there was a thick handbook devoted to procedures for handling *Republikflucht* casualties or corpses – the *Ordnung für die Bearbeitung von Leichenvorgängen* (*Regulations for the Processing of Corpses*).[6] In the first instance the body –whether or not already dead – would be loaded into an army vehicle rather than an ambulance, so as to avoid disturbing the population living in the border zone with flashing lights. If still alive, the failed escapee would be taken to a hospital designated by the *Grenztruppen*; the *Volkspolizei* hospital in Berlin-Mitte or the Drewitz Army Hospital near Potsdam, irrespective of whether there was a civilian hospital much closer. If the badly injured refugees had succumbed to their injuries by this stage they would then be taken to the Forensic Medicine Institute morgue at either the Humboldt University (Charité) Hospital in central Berlin or the Central Army Hospital in Bad Saarow, southeast of Berlin.

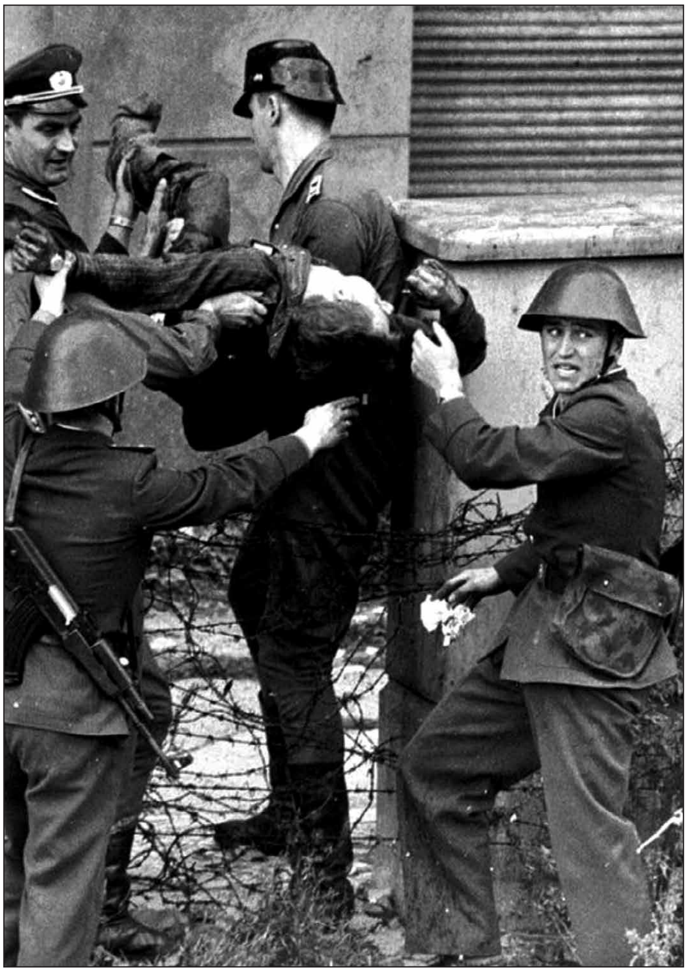
The *Stasi* would now take over, with investigating officers being assigned from the Berlin or Potsdam *MfS* offices (Department IX) or, for important or high-profile cases, from the *Hauptabteilung* (*HA*) *IX* investigations department at the *Stasi* headquarters on Normannenstraße in Berlin-Lichtenberg.

Injured escapees, who had managed to survive their arrest and journey, would be put in isolation wards at the hospitals, before being transferred to the *MfS* detention hospital or to the *Stasi* remand prisons in Berlin or Potsdam.

If the incident proved fatal, then the *MfS* had sole power of disposal of the body. They kept all the victim's belongings and personal effects as evidence, even down to the fatal bullet retrieved during the autopsy. They would conduct the autopsy, register



Peter Fechter's lifeless body lies just below the Wall on Zimmerstraße after being shot by East German border guards. He was allowed to bleed out without any first aid, 17 August 1962. (Federal Ministry for All-German Questions of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany)



Peter Fechter's body is removed from the Wall by East German border guards and policemen. (Albert Grandolini) the death with the Public Prosecutor's Office, issue the death certificate and arrange for the body to be cremated, normally at the Baumschulenweg crematorium in southwest Berlin. All without any involvement of the victim's family.

Every incident was investigated, not to assign blame to the shooter, but primarily to ensure news of the escape was suppressed, to investigate the friends and families of the victim, to discover the motives behind the escape attempt, to uncover other escape plots, and to look for weaknesses in the border fortifications. The *Stasi*'s Main Division I (*Hauptabteilung I*) – Counterintelligence would also become involved to look for more elaborate plots.

The victim's family would eventually be visited by a *Stasi* officer, normally posing as an official of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Greater Berlin. They would make enquiries about the individual, try to get as much background on them as possible, and only then would they inform the family of the untimely death of their loved one. Even then, the truth would be bent to suit the needs of the *MfS*, and the handbook listed a number of scenarios that should be used, irrespective of the actual circumstances of the death:

a) was killed through a self-inflicted border provocation,
b) had a self-inflicted fatal accident,
c) drowned in border waters.

Officers were advised to try to use the vaguer variant a), as variants b) and c) invited unwelcome questions about the nature and location of the incident – by using a) it was easier to justify why no further information could be given.

The relatives were told that they could not see the body, nor attend the cremation (although they would be asked to sign a form permitting the *MfS* to cremate the body), and in some cases, the urn containing the victim's ashes was returned to the relatives by post. The family *was* permitted to hold a small service to bury the ashes, but only with a *MfS* approved preacher, with an *MfS* approved sermon and with *MfS* officers present to ensure the Party line was maintained. Depending on how the family responded, the *Stasi* would determine whether further investigations or surveillance were needed. The immediate family were told, in no uncertain terms, that if they did not cooperate, the *Stasi* would publicly accuse the victim of all kinds of moral depravity, ruining the family's reputation and standing in the community. They were forced to lie to family and friends about the real nature of their loved ones' deaths or face dire consequences.

The causes of death supplied by the *MfS* were often gory, callous and unnecessarily brutal; a family was told that their son had drowned and had been mutilated by a ship's propellors, when he had actually been shot. Another was told he had been electrocuted; another that he had hanged himself; while another had fallen drunk into a builder's pit and was discovered sometime afterwards; anything other than admitting the truth that the *Grenztruppen* had shot their own citizens.

Autopsy reports and death certificates were routinely forged to comply with the elaborate lies, and all parties involved in the process had to continue the lie, all at the direction of the *MfS*. Some cases were kept completely secret, with the victim's disappearance being unexplained. Most families did not find out the truth about their loved ones until after the Wall came down, and the *Stasi* records were opened, or when the perpetrators were brought to justice in the 1990s.

The infamous *Schießbefehl* would come under intense scrutiny as the winds of change were felt across Europe during 1989. The regime had flatly denied it had existed, but following the death of Chris Gueffroy in February 1989, the *SED* leadership came under massive pressure from Moscow and the wider international community. Desperate to maintain the lines of Western credit that were keeping the DDR afloat, Honecker ordered that the *Schießbefehl* was to be quietly rescinded, although it would come back to haunt many DDR officials in later years as the courts of a re-unified Germany caught up with them.

Over the life of the Wall, 24 East German border guards were killed while on duty at the border. As part of the regime's mythologising of the Wall and indoctrination of their border troops, the casualties were portrayed as 'Socialist Heroes' or martyrs to the cause and elaborate memorials were built to these fallen heroes.[7] Young Pioneers, *FDJ* groups, tourists and foreign delegations were paraded in front of these memorials and special 'shrines' were set up in the troops' barracks. In reality, many of the fatalities were as a result of friendly fire incidents or being shot by defecting comrades in arms.

CONCLUSION

This book charts the first dozen years of the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, and yet it sets the tone for the whole lifespan of the communist experiment in East Germany. History has shown us that this regime, first led by Walter Ulbricht and then by Erich Honecker and watched over by their Soviet masters, was doomed to an ignominious failure in the late 1980s, however, back in the 1950s, the socialist paradise of workers and peasants should have been flourishing.

Unfortunately, the reality for many was a grim, monochrome existence, where free speech and freedom of expression were suppressed by an all-consuming police state. When in 1953, the workers objected to the regime, they were brutally put down by Soviet tanks. Many therefore chose to abandon their work, homes, family and friends and move across the then-invisible Iron Curtain to a brighter future in West Germany. They were leaving in their droves, in their tens of thousands, exactly the sort of people the DDR could not afford to lose – young professionals, skilled labourers, technicians and the recruiting pool for the nation's armed forces. The very future for the DDR was leaching across the border, and so in 1952 the *SED*, the ruling Communist Party, closed the 1,400km frontier with West Germany, creating a formidable and brutal fortified barrier, the Inner German Border, stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Czechoslovak border.

However, they left the inter-sector border open in Berlin, and all the border closure did was to funnel these desperate East Germans to Berlin, where they could sneak over the border into West Berlin, and freedom. And they were doing it at the rate of 4,409 people a week.[8] That is almost losing a country town's worth of people each week, a small town each month or a city each year.[9]

So, in 1961, the *SED* decided to close the Berlin 'escape hatch' and fence off the whole of West Berlin, creating the infamous Berlin Wall. With Europe's borders today mostly open, thanks to the 1985 Schengen Agreement, it is perhaps difficult to picture what a closed border looks like, especially one that is designed to lock its population in, rather than repel foreign invaders. It is hard to imagine being forcibly cut off from your loved ones by the mere fact that they live in a different postcode or borough. It is also hard to comprehend the brutal measures put in place to stop would-be escapees, and the harsh and often deadly penalties they faced.

And yet, that is exactly what happened in 1961 in Berlin, and the decision made in Moscow in July 1961 would wreck thousands of people's lives, and lead to *Stacheldrahtsonntag* on 13 August 1961, when Berlin was cleaved in two by the infamous 'Death Strip'. There is no doubt that Operation Rose was an outstanding success and the number of escapees (or refugees) dropped to a trickle, but this came at a huge human cost. For the remaining 28 years of the communist regime in East Germany, the border forces would work tirelessly to perfect their *Antifaschistischer Schutzwall*, but right up until the fall of the Wall in 1989, individuals were still trying to beat the system and escape, with feats of great ingenuity and bravery – many would lose their lives in the process.

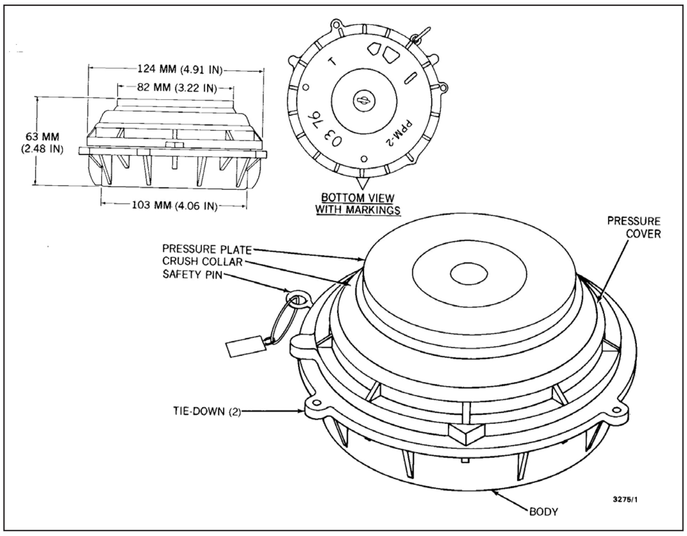
The Berlin Wall became a metaphor for the great East/West divide and the failing state of East Germany, and would remain, for another 28 years, at the very front line of the Cold War.

APPENDIX 1
THE INNER GERMAN BORDER

The easiest way to understand the IGB is to start at the actual border and move eastwards, which is the opposite way that a potential *Republikflüchtling* (escapee) would take.

Coming from the FRG, a traveller would see the occasional warning sign that the border was close – *HALT HIER GRENZE* (*STOP – BORDER AHEAD*). The actual border was initially marked with 20cm square granite blocks (*Grenzsteinen*) placed at irregular intervals along the demarcation line. In 1967, the stone blocks were replaced with 1.6m high black, yellow and red painted concrete posts, affixed with a metal plaque saying '*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*' and showing the state coat of arms (*Grenzsäule* or *Grenzpfahl*).[1]

A few metres 'inside' East Germany was the main IGB fence. The first generation main fences installed by the Soviets were single runs of 1.2m to 2.5m high barbed wire fixed to square or round wooden posts (*Stacheldrahtzäune*). In 1955 the Soviets handed responsibility of the IGB to the DDR, when the so-called second generation fences were installed in areas with particularly high traffic or escape rates. These consisted of 15cm square, 2m high reinforced concrete posts set at 3m intervals, strung with multiple strands of barbed wire. A second fence of the same construction was run parallel to the first with a gap of between 2m and 10m. In high-risk-of-escape areas, the gap between the fences was filled with concertina wire. From 1961, 555km (345 miles) of this fenced-in section would be mined with 1.3 million anti-personnel munitions of various types.



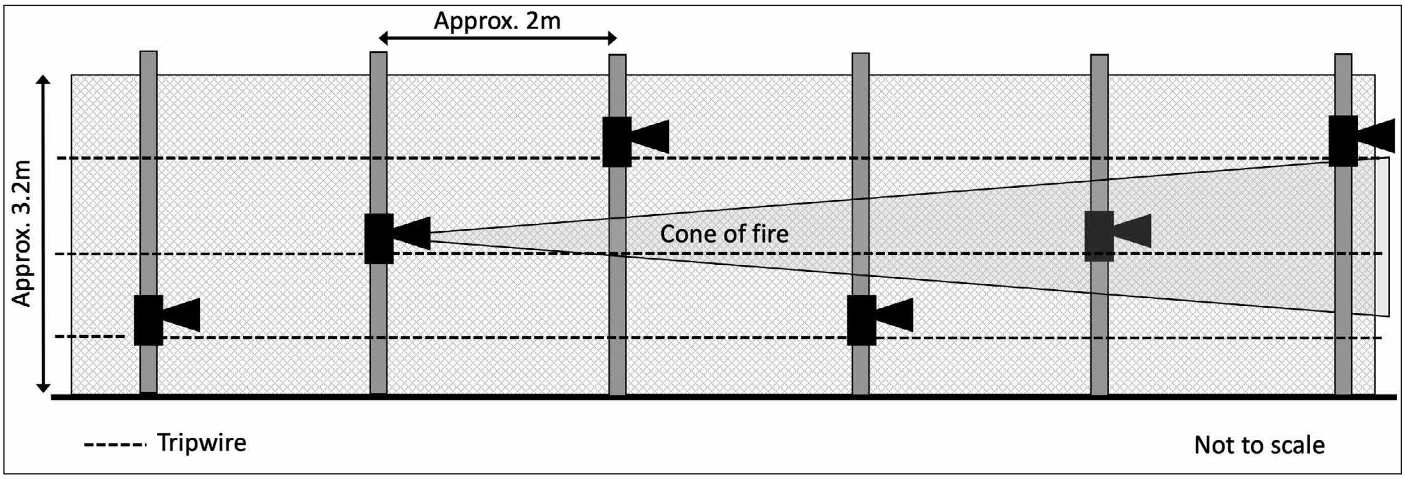
East German PPM-2 Anti-Personnel Blast Mine. (Iraq Ordnance Identification Guide, US Naval Explosive Ordnance Technology Division, January 2004)

Mines on the IGB

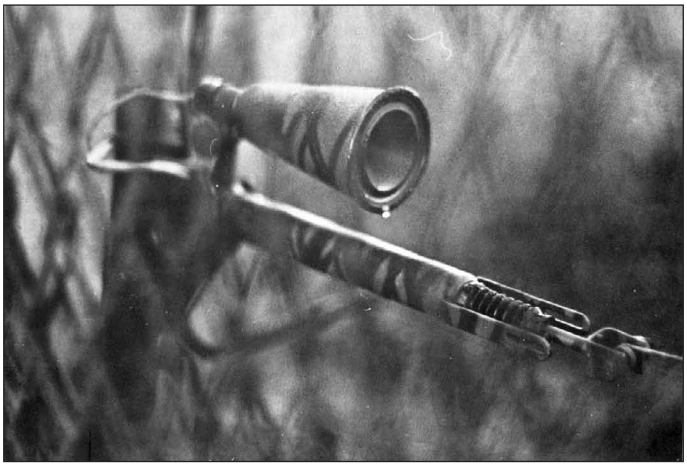
The East Germans initially used Soviet PMD-6M 'wooden box' or 'shoebox' mines, which, being mostly wooden, were not very durable, but were very hard to locate with mine detectors. They later used the more durable Soviet PMN-2 plastic mine, before developing a series of home-grown anti-personnel mines, the plastic PMP-71 and PPM-2, all of which detonated when stepped on. The POMZ-2 stake mine and the infamous SM-70 'automatic firing device' were both tripwire activated.

The SM-70 fragmentation mine or 'Splittermine 1970' was one of the most diabolical inventions to come out of the DDR, allegedly designed for use in the Nazi concentration camps of the Second World War. It is often referred to as the automatic firing gun or device (*Selbstschussanlage*), which is not strictly accurate. It is actually a horizontally firing directional anti-personnel fragmentation mine, although perhaps an automatically triggered blunderbuss would be a better analogy, and it was fitted to the Eastern side of the IGB main fence. The mine consisted of a horizontally mounted aluminium cone which contained 110g of TNT and approximately 110 steel cubes. The device was tripwire activated, with a N-172 firing mechanism detonating the explosive in the cone, firing the cubes horizontally at the height and direction set by the cone. The device was set to go off when the tripwire was tripped or cut and was lethal to a range of 120m.

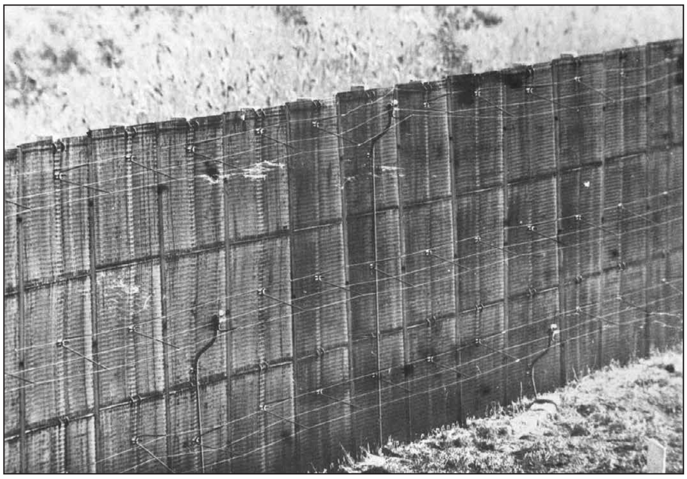
SM-70s were installed from 1970 in a repeat pattern over three fence posts to ensure 100 percent coverage and therefore 100 percent lethality. On the first post, the SM-70 was positioned close to the ground, on the second at mid-level and the third up high, with each mine's fatal zone overlapping, thus ensuring there was



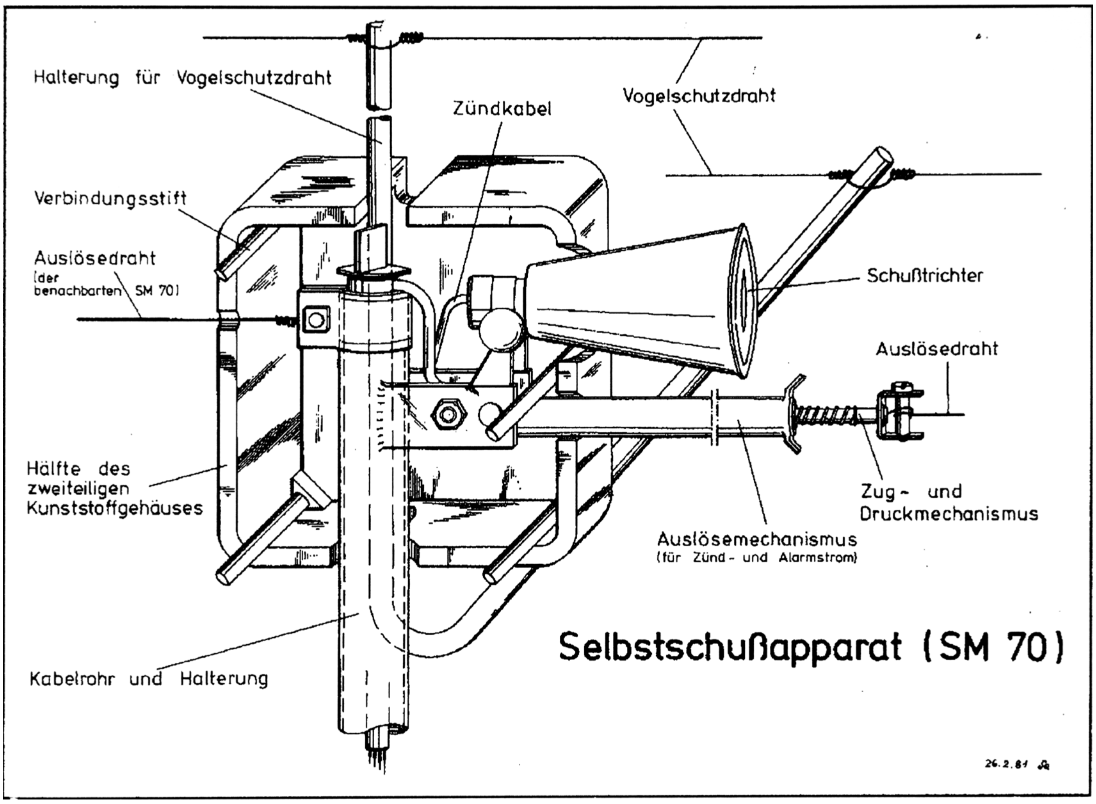
SM-70 mine placement and lethal zone. (Author)



SM-71 Fragmentation Mine in position on the Eastern side of the IGB main fence. (CDU/CSU group in the German Bundestag, White Paper on the human rights situation in Germany and of the Germans in Eastern Europe Bonn October 1977)



SM-70 fragmentation mine tripwires on the Eastern side of the IGB main fence. (CDU/CSU group in the German Bundestag, White Paper on the human rights situation in Germany and of the Germans in Eastern Europe Bonn October 1977)



Halterung für Vogelschutzdraht
Zündkabel
Vogelschutzdraht
Verbindungsstift
Auslösedraht (der benachbarten SM 70)
Schußtrichter
Auslösedraht
Hälfte des zweiteiligen Kunststoffgehäuses
Zug- und Druckmechanismus
Auslösemechanismus (für Zünd- und Alarmstrom)
Selbstschußapparat (SM 70)
Kabelrohr und Halterung
26.2.81

Cutaway diagram showing the SM-70 with its weather cover. Key translations c/o US Army. (Public Domain)

Label translations	
German	**English**
Zündkabel	Detonation cable
Vogelschutzdraht	‘Bird’ wires
Schußtrichter	Muzzle device
Auslösedraht	Tripwire
Zug und Druckmechanismus	Pressure and pull mechanism
Auslösemechanismus (für Zünd und Alarmstrom)	Detonation mechanism
Kabelrohr und Halterung	Cable pipe and support
Hälfte des zweiteiligen Kunststoffgehäuses	Half of two-part plastic cover
Auslösedraht (der benachbarten SM 70)	Tripwire from neighbouring SM-70
Verbindungsstift	Connecting rod (for cover)
Halterung für Vogelschutzdraht	‘Bird’ wire support

Mine Munitions used at the Inner German Border[3]

	PMD-6M	**PMN-2**	**PMP-71**	**PPM-2**	**POMZ-2**	**SM-70**
Origin	USSR	USSR	DDR	DDR	USSR/DDR	DDR
Years	1962-79	1963-85	1971-85	1971-85	1961-70	1970-84
Type	Blast	Blast	Blast	Blast	Fragmentation	Fragmentation
Target	AP	AP	AP	AP/LV	AP Stake	AP
Construction	Wood	Plastic	Plastic	Plastic	Steel	Mixed
Weight	400g	450g	1.5kg	370g	2.3kg	N/A
Explosive content	200 g	115 g	100 g	110 g	75 g	110 g
Explosive type	TNT	TNT RDX	TNT	TNT	TNT	TNT
Length	190mm	-	-	-	-	N/A
Width	90mm	-	-	-	-	N/A
Diameter	-	125mm	175mm	125mm	60mm	N/A
Height	65mm	54mm	150mm	63mm	130mm	N/A
Operating Pressure	6kg	6kg	6-8kg	11-15kg	Tripwire	Tripwire
Range	20m	15m	15m	20m	50m	100-120 m

AP = Anti-Personnel
LV = Light Vehicle

no escape from the deadly shrapnel shower. The pattern was then repeated along the fence.

To stop birds from setting the mines off, separate bird protection wires were strung from the devices, although wildlife did regularly trigger them, and a plastic cover was designed to protect the mechanism from the elements. If an escapee set a mine off, the guards would be alerted by the loud explosion and by sensors in their guard towers. Patrols would immediately be despatched to apprehend or shoot any survivors and retrieve the bodies. Approximately 60,000 of these deadly devices were installed along 440km of the IGB that were deemed vulnerable to escape. They were so controversial, that the East German authorities chose not to use them along the Berlin Wall when it was built, to avoid the intense international scrutiny in the city.

International pressure forced the East German authorities to remove the SM-70s, despite the DDR denying that they had ever existed, and the last was decommissioned on 30 November 1984.[2]

The third generation fence (the so-called 'modern' border) was installed between 1967 and 1972, and incorporated lessons learnt from the closing of the border around West Berlin. The barbed wire was replaced by razor sharp expanded steel mesh (*Metallgitterzaun*, literally 'metal lattice work'), which was virtually impossible to climb, and could not be cut by wire-cutters. The mesh was fitted to 3.2m to 4m high concrete posts set at 2m intervals, with some of the mesh extending below ground, and it was this type of fencing that would have the SM-70 fragmentation mines and tripwires attached. This set up, (less the SM-70s, which were removed in 1984) would last until reunification.

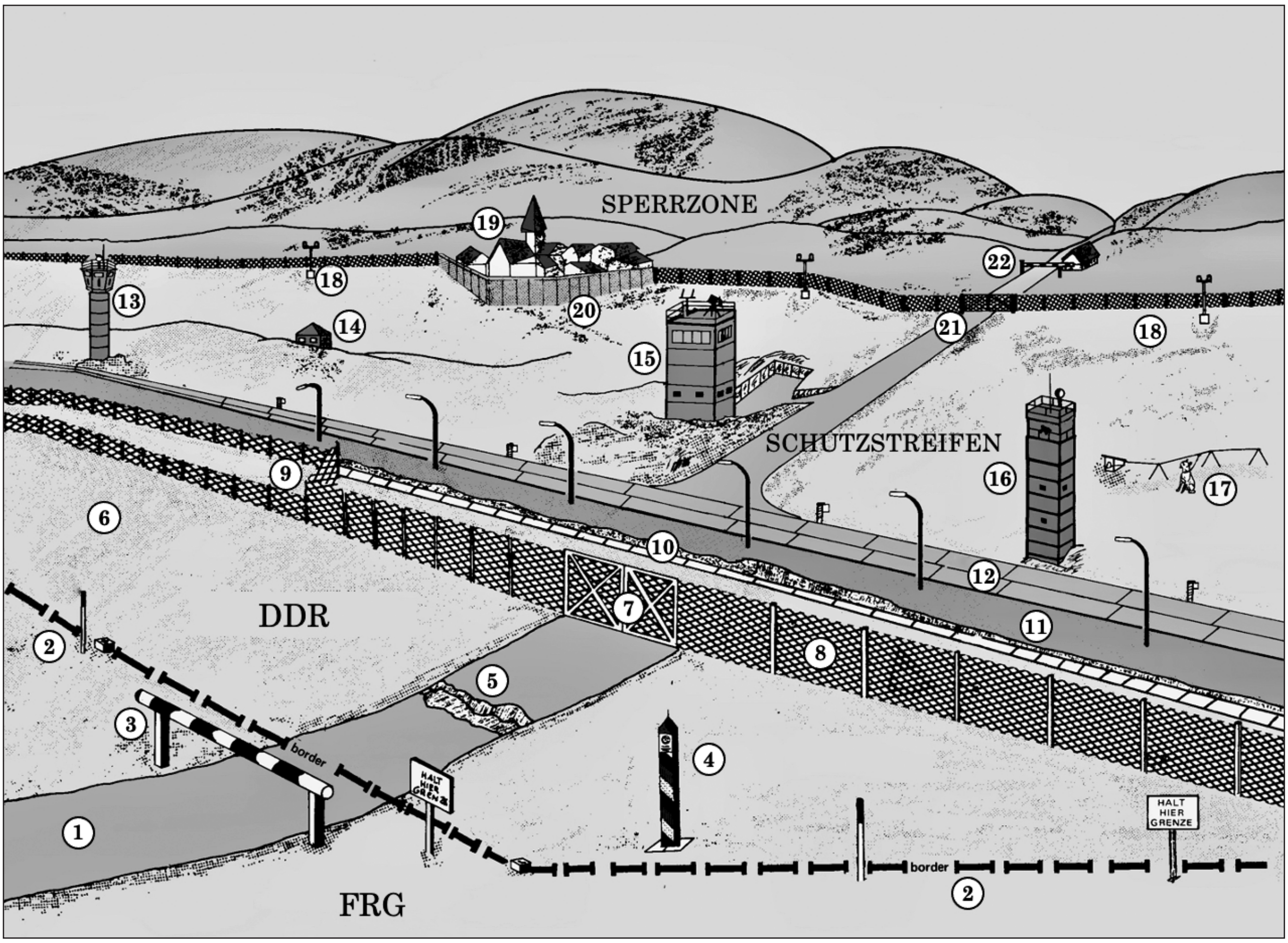
On the Eastern side of the main fence, there was the 500m wide Security Zone (*Schutzstreifen*), cleared of all vegetation to provide a clear field of fire and packed with obstacles designed to trap any determined *Republikflüchtlinge*. This was the infamous 'Death Strip' (*Todesstreifen*), as christened by Western media, where any would-be escapee was likely to be shot or blown up by a mine. The exact configuration would vary according to local topography and whether there were any roads or rivers intersecting the border. The ground would be regularly sprayed with herbicides and defoliants to ensure no vegetation grew to block the view.

The first obstacle in the *Schutzstreifen* was usually an anti-vehicular ditch (*Kraftfahrzeug Sperrgraben*). These ditches were formidable barriers, cut into the ground in a V shape, with the eastwards slope being shallow and the westward slope being steep. They were lined with concrete slabs and were at least 80cm deep, stopping everything bar the tracks of a main battle tank. The angle of the sides was significant – if the ditches had been designed to stop marauding hordes of imperialist Western aggressors, then they would have been orientated the other way round. They were there solely to stop East Germans trying to crash a vehicle through the main fence. About two thirds of the IGB featured these ditches.

Next was a 6-metre raked strip of bare earth, the width varied depending on topology and could be as little as 4 metres and as much as 13 metres wide, running parallel to and on the east side of the main fence. The East Germans called it the '*Aktion*' or 'Control' Strip (*Handlungsstreifen*) or '*Pieck Straße*', named after Wilhelm Pieck, the DDR's first (and only) president, but it is sometimes called the 'Death Strip' in the West. The neatly raked soil would slow down a would-be escapee and showed up any disturbances (a technique learnt from the Soviets and put to good use later on the Berlin Wall), and while it did little to actually stop escapees (unless they were caught in the act by guards), it helped identify how many people had attempted to cross and where the weak points in the defences were. Maintenance of the strip was undertaken by the *Grenzpioniere*, the Border Construction Brigade, who raked it by pulling a 3-metre-wide harrow behind a KT-50 tracked tractor.

Next to the Control Strip would be a path or road (*Kolonnenweg*) for use by the *Grenztruppen*. The grass paths were soon churned up by vehicles, so by the late 1960s, they had been reinforced with prefabricated concrete slabs.[4] High-intensity floodlights (*Beleuchtungsanlage*) on tall concrete poles would illuminate the patrol road and *Handlungsstreifen*.

After the *Kolonnenweg*, there could be some additional obstacles depending on the topography or in areas that were susceptible to escape. These included *Panzersperre* or *Stahligeln*, which were half-tonne hedgehog tank traps made from welded train and tram tracks and could stop almost any type of vehicle. The *Panzersperre* were more prevalent at the Berlin Wall, but they could also be found in



The definitive IGB fortifications (1980s)

Key:
From West to East

FRG Territory

1. A road which previously linked East and West
2. The actual border with *HALT HIER GRENZE* (STOP BORDER) signposts on the West German (FRG) side
3. Traditional frontier pole barrier

DDR Territory
The fortifications begin well into East German territory

4. DDR Border marker pole with diagonal black, red and yellow stripes (*Grenzsäule*)
5. Anti-vehicle ditch across former road
6. Unfortified borderland
7. Double gate (unused)

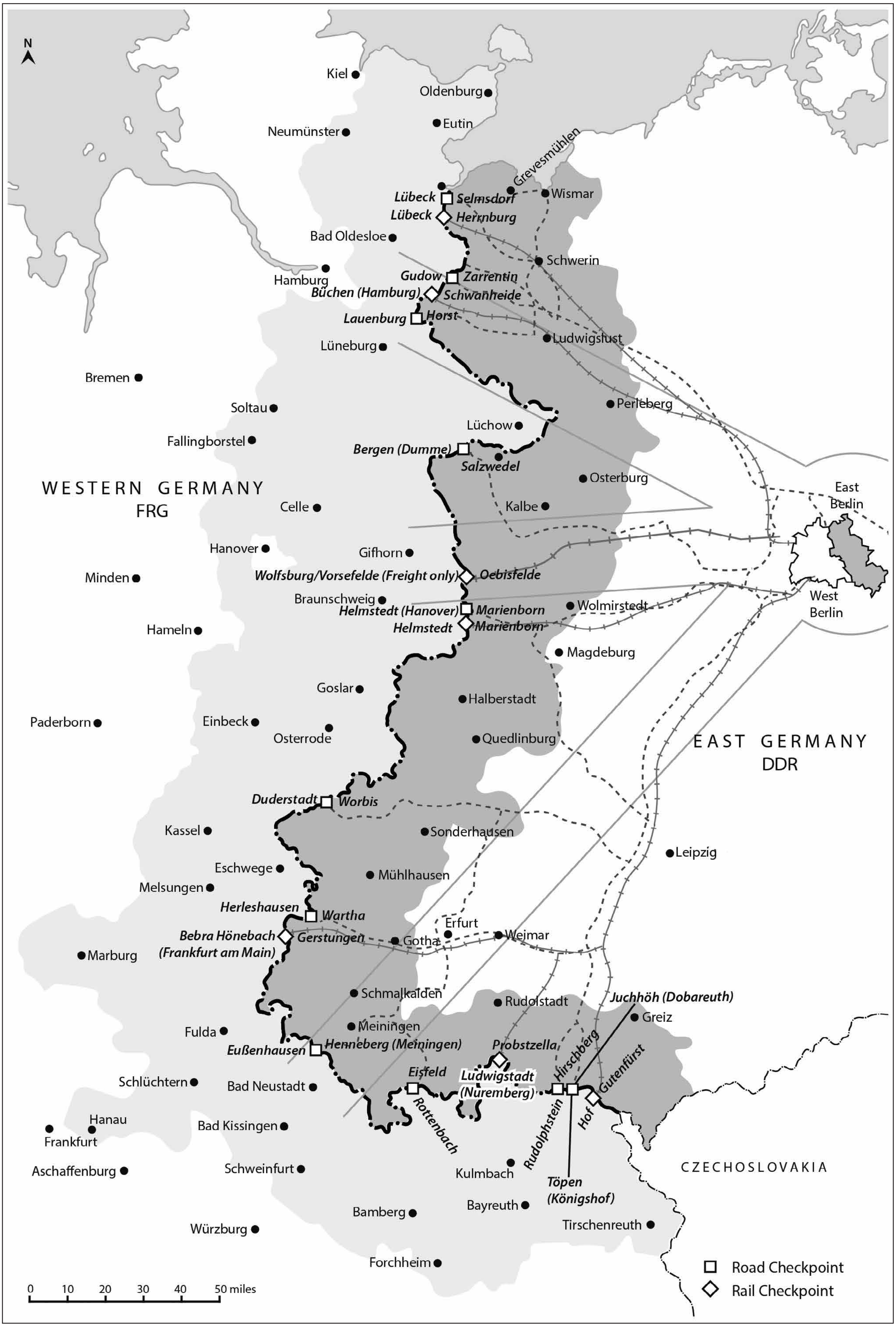
The *Schutzstreifen* (500m Security Zone, known in the West as the Death Strip or *Todesstreifen*)

8. Metal-mesh main border fence (*Metallgitterzaun*). This fence would be fitted with SM-70 fragmentation mines until 1984
9. Double fence section – the area between the two fences was mined
10. Concrete-faced anti-vehicle ditch *Kraftfahrzeug Sperrgraben*
11. Flood-lit Action Control Strip (*Handlungsstreifen mit Beleuch-tungsanlage*), also sometimes referred to as the ‘Death Strip’
12. Guard patrol road (*Kolonnenweg*)
13. BT-11 watchtower
14. Guard post/bunker
15. Command-and-Control tower (*Führungsstelle* or *Kommandoturm*)
16. BT-9 watchtower
17. Dog run (*Hundefreilungs*)
18. Signal fence (*Signalzaun*)
19. Village close to the border
20. Concrete barrier wall (*Betonsperrmauern*)
21. Access gate between *Schutzstreifen* and *Sperrzone*

***Sperrzone* (5km wide Restricted Zone)**

22. *Kontrollpassierpunkt* Checkpoint

(US Army Military History Office and Author)


N
Kiel
Oldenburg
Eutin
Neumünster
Grevesmühlen
Wismar
Lübeck
Selmsdorf
Lübeck
Herrnburg
Bad Oldesloe
Schwerin
Hamburg
Gudow
Zarrentin
Büchen (Hamburg)
Schwanheide
Lauenburg
Horst
Lüneburg
Ludwigslust
Bremen
Perleberg
Soltau
Lüchow
Fallingborstel
Bergen (Dumme)
Salzwedel
Osterburg
WESTERN GERMANY
FRG
Celle
Kalbe
East Berlin
Hanover
Gifhorn
Minden
Wolfsburg/Vorsefelde (Freight only)
Oebisfelde
Braunschweig
Helmstedt (Hanover)
Marienborn
Wolmirstedt
Helmstedt
Marienborn
West Berlin
Hameln
Magdeburg
Goslar
Halberstadt
Paderborn
Einbeck
Osterrode
Quedlinburg
EAST GERMANY
DDR
Duderstadt
Worbis
Kassel
Sonderhausen
Leipzig
Eschwege
Mühlhausen
Melsungen
Herleshausen
Wartha
Erfurt
Bebra Hönebach
Gerstungen
Gotha
Weimar
Marburg
(Frankfurt am Main)
Schmalkalden
Rudolstadt
Juchhöh (Dobareuth)
Greiz
Meiningen
Fulda
Eußenhausen
Henneberg (Meiningen)
Probstzella
Hirschberg
Gutenfürst
Eisfeld
Ludwigstadt
(Nuremberg)
Schlüchtern
Bad Neustadt
Hof
Hanau
Rottenbach
Rudolphstein
Frankfurt
Bad Kissingen
Aschaffenburg
Schweinfurt
Kulmbach
Töpen
(Königshof)
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Bayreuth
Bamberg
Würzburg
Tirschenreuth
Forchheim
Road Checkpoint
Rail Checkpoint
0
10
20
30
40
50 miles

The Inner German Border with Crossing Points and Transit Routes. (George Anderson)

Table 7: Extent of Third Generation IGB Installations, 1989[6]

English	German	Length/Number
Expanded steel mesh fencing	*Metallgitterzaun*	1,265 km
Hinterland signal fencing	*Signalzaun*	1,185 km
Concrete barrier walls	*Betonsperrmauern*	29.1 km
Anti-vehicle ditches	*Kraftfahrzeug Sperrgraben*	829 km
Light barbed wire barriers	*Lichtsperren*	232.3 km
Dog runs	*Hundefreilungs*	71.5 km
Patrol roads	*Kolonnenweg*	1,339 km
Concrete observation towers	BT-11 (RBT), BT-9 & *Führungsstelle*	529
Steel and wood observation towers	-	155
Observation bunkers	-	425

the *Schutzstreifen*. There could also be dog runs (*Hundefreilungs*), where attack dogs would be tethered to a 100-metre-long steel cable and allowed to run free along its length. Where there were parallel fence sections free of mines and barbed wire, dogs were sometimes allowed to roam inside.

Dotted along the *Schutzstreifen* were a variety of watch towers and observation bunkers. Watch towers (*Wachtürme*) were located at key vantage points along the 500m wide Security Zone (*Schutzstreifen*). These began as very basic wooden structures and developed into sizeable prefabricated concrete buildings, designs that were replicated at the Berlin Wall.

An 'inner' electronic sensor fence (*Signalzaun*) marked the transition between the 500m Security Zone (*Schutzstreifen*) and the next stage of border defences. The *Signalzaun* was a 2m high combination fence with Y shaped barbed wire outriggers on top of the posts, vicious expanded steel mesh on the Western side, and multiple horizontal strands of wire fitted on the Eastern side. If these strands were cut or if two were touched at once, alarms would sound in the nearby control towers. Although the sensors were the same type as used in Berlin, as with much East German technology, the system was very unreliable and rarely worked. Some lighter barbed wire fences (*Lichtsperren*) were also used to supplement the other fence formats.

Gates in the *Signalzaun* allowed the *Grenztruppen* to move east into the 5km (3.1 miles) wide 'Exclusion' or 'Restricted' Zone (*Sperrzone*). The *Sperrzone* was de-militarised and had been 'cleansed' of numerous undesirables in June/July 1952 under Operation Vermin (*Aktion Ungesiefer*),[5] but it was still closely monitored by the *Stasi*, the *Volkspolizei* and the *FHG*. The *Freiwilliger Helfer der Grenztruppen* or Volunteer Border Force Helpers).

Roads into the *Sperrzone* were blocked by control checkpoints (*Kontrollpassierpunkt*) and required a very good reason for being there. This was particularly problematic if an individual lived or worked inside the zone. Residents had special passes and registration plates on their vehicles, and farmers had to apply for special permission to tend their crops or livestock. Villages in the *Sperrzone* that abutted the inner *Signalzaun* would have high wooden slatted fences (*Holzlattenzaun*) erected to block off views of the border fortifications, and these would be replaced in the 1970s by 3m to 4m high concrete barriers (*Betonsperrmauern*). Windows in the upper floors of houses next to the border were bricked up and buildings deemed to be too close were simply demolished.

Transit Route and Crossing Points

The IGB was also the first checkpoint any road, rail or waterway traveller to West Berlin would encounter, and was their first taste of East German officialdom. The checkpoints themselves were heavily fortified and travellers would have to endure long waits, detailed checks of paperwork and potentially intrusive vehicle searches. The routes themselves were fenced in, and heavily guarded and all traffic was logged – if the vehicle arrived late at the expected checkpoint into West Berlin, it could be investigated for making illegal stops en route, and if it arrived too soon, the driver could be prosecuted for speeding (there was a 60km/h limit, so it was easy to calculate the minimum legal crossing time). Over the years, the routes were expanded to increase the northern routes and to allow for increased freight traffic. As well as road and rail, there were specified river and canal routes, which came under similar scrutiny, plus the three air corridors that became famous during the 1948-1949 Berlin Airlift.

APPENDIX 2

CROSSING POINTS AND TRANSIT ROUTES FROM FRG ACROSS DDR TO WEST BERLIN

	North to South	**Type**	**West side of checkpoint**	**East side of checkpoint**	**West Border Region**	**East Border Region**	**Berlin Terminus**
1	North	Road	Lübeck (Schlutup)	Selmsdorf	Schleswig – Holstein	Mecklenburg – Vorpommern (Bezirk Schwerin)	Dallgow/ Staaken: Spandau (Heerstraße)
2		Rail	Lübeck	Herrnberg	Schleswig – Holstein	Mecklenburg – Vorpommern (Bezirk Schwerin)	Griebnitzsee / Neubabelsberg *
3		Road	Gudow	Zarrentin	Schleswig – Holstein	Mecklenburg – Vorpommern (Bezirk Schwerin)	Berlin-Heiligensee/ Stolpe
4		Rail	Büchen(Hamburg)	Schwanheide	Schleswig – Holstein	Mecklenburg – Vorpommern (Bezirk Schwerin)	Griebnitzsee / Neubabelsberg *
5		Road	Lauenburg	Horst	Schleswig – Holstein	Mecklenburg – Vorpommern (Bezirk Schwerin)	Dallgow/ Staaken: Spandau (Heerstraße)
6		Road	Bergen (Dumme)	Salzwedel	Lower Saxony	Saxony – Anhalt (Bezirk Magdeburg)	Dallgow/ Staaken: Spandau (Heerstraße)
7	Central	Rail	Wolfsburg / Vorsefelde (Freight only)	Oebisfelde	Lower Saxony	Saxony – Anhalt (Bezirk Magdeburg)	Griebnitzsee / Neubabelsberg *
8		Road	Helmstedt (Checkpoint Alpha)	Marienborn	Lower Saxony	Saxony – Anhalt (Bezirk Magdeburg)	Dreilinden / Drewitz (Checkpoint Bravo)
9		Rail	Helmstedt (Hannover)	Marienborn	Lower Saxony	Saxony – Anhalt (Bezirk Magdeburg)	Griebnitzsee / Neubabelsberg *
10		Road	Duderstadt	Worbis	Lower Saxony	Thuringia	Dreilinden / Drewitz (Checkpoint Bravo)
11		Road	Herles-hausen	Wartha	Hessen	Thuringia	Dreilinden / Drewitz (Checkpoint Bravo)
12		Rail	Bebra(Frankfurt am Main)	Gerstungen	Hessen	Thuringia	Griebnitzsee / Neubabelsberg *
13	South	Road	Eußen-hausen	Henneberg (Meiningen)	Bavaria	Thuringia	Dreilinden / Drewitz (Checkpoint Bravo)
14		Road	Rottenbach	Eisfeld	Bavaria	Thuringia	Dreilinden / Drewitz (Checkpoint Bravo)
15		Rail	Ludwigsstadt(Nuremberg)	Probstzella	Bavaria	Thuringia	Griebnitzsee / Neubabelsberg *
16a		Road	Rudolphstein	Hirschberg	Bavaria	Thuringia	Dreilinden / Drewitz (Checkpoint Bravo)
16b		Road	Töpen (Königshof)	Juchhöh (Dobareuth)	Bavaria	Thuringia	Dreilinden / Drewitz (Checkpoint Bravo)
17		Rail	Hof	Gutenfürst	Bavaria	Saxony	Griebnitzsee / Neubabelsberg *
18		Water	Schnacken-burg	Cumlosen	Lower Saxony	Brandenburg	Nedlitz

	North to South	Type	West side of checkpoint	East side of checkpoint	West Border Region	East Border Region	Berlin Terminus
19		Water	Buchhorst	Rühen	Lower Saxony	Saxony – Anhalt (Bezirk Magdeburg)	Nedlitz

* Main rail intersection/crossing: Griebnitzsee/Neubabelsberg – Berlin-Wannsee/Griebnitzsee (passenger), Steinstücken/Drewitz Station (freight)

APPENDIX 3

STATISTICS FOR REFUGEES FROM EAST GERMANY TO WEST GERMANY[1]

Year	Relocation of refugees from East to West Germany *	Weekly average (based on 52 weeks per year)	Approved relocation to the West *
1949	129,245	2,485	-
1950	197,788	3,804	-
1951	165,648	3,186	-
1952	182,393	3,508	-
1953	331,390	6,373	-
1954	184,198	3,542	-
1955	252,870	4,863	-
1956	279,189	5,369	-
1957	261,622	5,031	-
1958	204,092	3,925	-
1959	143,917	2,768	-
1960	199,188	3,831	-
1961	207,026	3,981	-
1962	21,365	411	4,624
1963	42,622	820	29,655
1964	41,866	805	30,012
1965	29,552	568	17,666
1966	24,131	464	15,675
1967	19,573	376	13,188
1968	16,036	308	11,134
1969	16,975	326	11,702
1970	17,519	337	12,472
1971	17,408	335	11,565
1972	17,164	330	11,627
1973	15,189	292	8,667
1974	13,252	255	7,928
1975	16,285	313	10,274
1976	15,168	292	10,058
1977	12,078	232	8,041
1978	12,117	233	8,271

Year	**Relocation of refugees from East to West Germany ***	**Weekly average (based on 52 weeks per year)**	**Approved relocation to the West ***
1979	12,515	241	9,003
1980	12,763	245	8,775
1981	15,433	297	11,093
1982	13,208	254	9,113
1983	11,343	218	7,729
1984	40,974	788	34,982
1985	24,912	479	18,752
1986	26,178	503	19,982
1987	18,958	365	11,459
1988	39,832	766	27,939
1989	343,854	6,613	101,947
1990**	250,000	4,808	-
Totals	3,896,836	74,939	483,333

* Based on Western data.
** Accurate records are not available for Western data from 1990.

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www.cia.gov, Central Intelligence Agency, Center for the Study of Intelligence
www.nato.int, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
www.jfklibrary.org, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library
www.berlin.de, Berlin's official website, with a lot of Berlin Wall material (German, English, French & Italian)
www.berlinwallmap.info, a very useful map of the Berlin Wall and Berlin occupation sectors
www.berliner-mauer-gedenkstaette.de, Berlin War Memorial (German English & French)
www.bpb.de, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, The German Federal Agency for Civic Education (German, some in English)
www.17juni53.de, a BpB site about the 17 June 1953 worker's uprising in East Germany (German only)
www.chronik-der-mauer.de, a very useful chronical of the Berlin Wall (German, English)
www.jugendopposition.de, another BpB site about youth opposition to the DDR regime (German only)
www.forum-ddr-grenze.de, interesting forum on the DDR *Grenztruppen* (German only *)
https://history.army.mil, U.S. Army, Center of Military History
https://gdrobjectified.wordpress.com, excellent English language blog on all aspects of the DDR
https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org, a valuable Cold War information resource
https://nsarchive.gwu.edu, US National Security Archive at The George Washington University – a trove of Cold War primary source material
https://history.state.gov Office of the Historian of the US State Department

Note that most web browsers will translate web pages, with reasonable accuracy

Podcasts

East Germany Podcast – Radio GDR, A series of conversations about the former DDR (www.radiogdr.com)
Cold War Conversations. As the name implies, experts in the field and those who experienced the Cold War in conversation with the presenter (www.coldwarconversations.com)

NOTES

Chapter 1

1 International Churchill Society <https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/the-sinews-of-peace/> accessed 29 November 2020.

Chapter 2

1 German People's Congress – *Deutscher Volkskongress.*

2 Pieck and Grotewohl led the forced merger between the *KPD* and *SPD* in April 1946 to form the *SED*.

3 Pieck lost most of his power to Walter Ulbricht in 1950 but kept the title of President at Stalin's insistence.

4 Uelzen was an unusual and somewhat insensitive choice for a refugee camp, having been home to a Nazi concentration camp during the Second World War.

5 *Republikflucht* (literally 'flight from the Republic') was the East German legal term for the statutory offense of illegally (without consent of the state authorities) leaving the country. The offender became a *Republikflüchtling* (Plural – *Republikflüchtlinge*). The *Stasi* also used *Grenzverletzer* for those who attempted to cross the Inner-German border. Refugees referred to themselves as a '*Flūchtling*(*e*)' or '*Umsiedler*' (Resettler).

6 Note from the Soviet Foreign Ministry to the American Embassy, Enclosing a Draft for a German Peace Treaty, March 10, 1952; reprinted in *Documents on Germany, 1944-1959: Background Documents on Germany, 1944-1959, and a Chronology of Political Developments affecting Berlin, 1945-1956* (Washington, DC: General Printing Office, 1959), pp.85-87.

7 German History in Documents and Images (GHDI) <https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=3890> accessed 27 May 2021.

8 Additional FRG frontier protection was undertaken by the *Bayerische Grenzpolizei* (Bavarian Border Police) and the *Bundeszollverwaltung* (Federal Customs Administration). <https://history.army.mil/documents/borderOps/ch3.htm> accessed on 28 May 2021.

9 < https://www.jugendopposition.de> accessed 9.7.21.

10 Source: Robert Havemann Society.

Chapter 3

1 Hildebrandt went on to create the famous Haus am Checkpoint Charlie museum.

2 Thomas Rid, *Active Measures, The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare* (London: Profile Books, 2020).

3 George F. Kennan, 'The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare' [Redacted Version]," April 30, 1948, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Obtained and contributed by A. Ross Johnson. Cited in his book *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, Ch1 n4. NARA release courtesy of Douglas Selvage. Redacted final draft of a memorandum dated May 4, 1948, and published with additional redactions as document 269, 'FRUS, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment.' https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114320.

4 NSC 10/2 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945-50Intel/d292> accessed 20.5.21.

5 DTLINEN Project Outline, August 1956 < https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DTLINEN-KGU%20%20%20VOL.%201_0094.pdf> accessed 18 May 2021.

6 Harvey was a legendary figure in American intelligence. He began his career as an FBI agent, but fell out with his superiors, and joined the CIA. He took with him his love of guns, and insisted his officers carried them at all times, a practice that was unusual at the time. He was instrumental in the disinformation programme and the Berlin Tunnel, both run out of BOB.

7 This source, of course, went dark overnight on 13 August 1961 when the borders were closed, and the Wall was built.

8 1.5 to 2 million youths from 80 different countries.

9 Rid, *Active Measures*.

10 A similar method is still used by North Korean defectors living in South Korea to send subversive material north over the impregnable North Korean border.

11 Rid, *Active Measures.*

12 It is now widely accepted that the SVR, Russia's foreign intelligence agency and the successor to the KGB, is still actively involved in 'Active Measures' and *Dezinformatsiya*, including trying to influence the 2016 US Presidential Election.

13 They would continue to decipher the signals intercepts for some years, helping to reveal the atomic spies: Klaus Fuchs, David Greenglass and the Rosenbergs.

14 Anon, *The Berlin Tunnel Operation, 1952 – 1956* (Langley: Central Intelligence Agency, Clandestine Services History, Paper No. 150, 24 June 1968).

15 Memo from Lucian B. Truscott, Chief of Mission, CIA Frankfurt to Director Central Intelligence, *The Berlin Tunnel, On the Front Lines of the Cold War: Documents on the Intelligence War in Berlin, 1946 to 1961* (Langley: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 2007) V-1: Field Project Outline, 16 September 1953 (MORI No. 144126).

16 Increases in signals traffic could indicate a major exercise or even preparations for an attack, as could unusual decreases. The Soviets were very good at mobilising troops in total radio silence.

17 Donald P. Steury (Ed), V-5: CSHP History: *Soviet Discovery of the Berlin Tunnel*, (Tape Transcript) Undated (MORI No. 145737), *The Berlin Tunnel, On the Front Lines of the Cold War: Documents on the Intelligence War in Berlin, 1946 to 1961* (Langley: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 2007).

18 Steury, *Soviet Discovery of the Berlin Tunnel.*

19 Blake was finally arrested on 10 April 1961 and was sentenced to a record 42 years in prison on 3 May 1961. He escaped from prison on 22 October 1966 and was smuggled back to the Soviet Union. He died on 26 December 2020 in Moscow, aged 98.

20 Gregory W.Pedlow and Donald E.Welzenbach, *The CIA and the U-2 Program*, 1954-1974 (Langley: History Staff Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 1998)

21 CIA, *The Berlin Tunnel*

Chapter 4

1 Federal Republic of Germany, FRG, *Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, *BRD* or 'the Bonn Republic' became a sovereign state on 5 May 1955, with certain restrictions that remained in place until reunification in 1990.

2 Brandt was replaced by Helmut Schmidt, an ex-*Wehrmacht* soldier who was much harder headed than his predecessor. He continued the *Ostpolitik* but also tackled the mid-70s economic recession and left-wing terrorism head on.

3 Source: Wolfgang Mayer, Anita-Tykve-Verlag, December 2002 <www.flucht-und-ausreise.de> via <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1054017/relocation-between-east-and-west-germany-1949-1990/> accessed 18.6.21.

Chapter 5

1 Greece and Turkey joined NATO in 1952, securing the Alliance's southern flank with the Soviet Union.
2 Vojtech Mastny, and Malcolm Byrne (Eds), *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact 1955-1991*, National Security Archive Washington and the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich (Budapest: Central European Press, 2005)
3 With the exception of the permanently neutral Switzerland and Austria.
4 '*On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences*' was delivered by Khrushchev on 25 February 1956 in Moscow at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The speech shocked the communist world to its very core, causing celebration, confusion and anger in equal measure. It has been labelled as Khrushchev's 'Secret' speech as it was delivered behind closed doors, but in reality, it was widely distributed in printed form around the Soviet Bloc and soon found its way to the West.
5 A policy of 'revanchism' or 'irredentism' on West Germany's part, advocating the restoration to a country of any territory formerly belonging to it. Confirming Germany's post-war borders would remain a source of concern for the Soviet leadership for much of the Cold War.
6 For a fuller account of the shooting down of Powers' U-2 aircraft, and several other similar incidents in this period, see Helion's Europe @War volume *Hunt for the U-2*.
7 Khrushchev's speech was delivered on 6 January 1961 to a meeting of the Party Organisations in the Higher Party School, the Academy of Social Sciences and the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Central Committee, Communist Party of the Soviet Union and was widely published in the Soviet press.
8 < https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/inaugural-address> accessed 30 June 2021.
9 <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/034/JFKPOF-034-003> accessed 22 June 2021.
10 27-year-old Yuri Gagarin's mission began with the launch of his Vostok K rocket from Baikonur Cosmodrome in southern Kazakhstan and he orbited for 108 minutes, reaching a maximum height of 203 miles, ejecting at 23,000 feet, and descending to earth by parachute. Derived from the Soviet R-7 Semyorka Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, the Vostok rocket was designed as both a manned and unmanned launcher. Alan Shepard's 15 ½ minute sub-orbital space flight on 5 May 1961 began on top of a Mercury-Redstone launch vehicle and travelled 116 miles before splashing down into the Atlantic Ocean.
11 Walter Lippman, *New York Herald Tribune*, 17, 18 and 19 April 1961 via New York Public Library.
12 The Invasion took place at the Bahía de Cochinos, the Bay of Pigs.
13 There's an interesting connection between the Bay of Pigs disaster, the shooting down of the U-2 spy plane and the 'Bridge of Spies' between East and West Berlin. American lawyer James Donovan is known for negotiating the release of Francis Gary Powers, the pilot of the U-2, in a prisoner exchange with Soviet spy Colonel Rudolf Abel at the Glienicke Bridge in Berlin in February 1962. Donovan was also asked to negotiate the release of the captured Cuban exiles and managed to secure the release of the exiles in exchange for $53 million worth of medical and food aid.
14 < https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/united-states-congress-special-message-19610525> accessed 23 June 2021.
15 Much of the MAP was destined for Vietnam.
16 It would also confirm Europe's borders as they were at the end of the Second World War, which was a key point for the Soviet leader.
17 < https://footage-berlin.com/en/nobody-has-any-intention-of-building-a-wall-walter-ulbricht-june-15-1961/> accessed 23 June 2021.
18 The word describes the fear, usually as you get older, that time is running out and important opportunities are slipping away. *Torschlusspanik* is a combination of three German words, literally translated as 'gate-shut-panic'. Modern usage typically refers to a mid-life crisis, the ticking of the biological clock or in this case, the impending border closure.
19 Around this time, the DDR introduced policies to punish the families of *Republikflüchtlinge* as a disincentive for others to leave. After the wall went up, escapee's families would face official discrimination in everyday life and those found have helped an escapee would risk imprisonment.
20 Honecker rose to a position of power through his leadership of the *FDJ*, the youth wing of the *SED*. After handing the *FDJ* to Karl Namokel, he went to Moscow for ideological training, returning in 1958 to the Politburo, with responsibility for military and security matters. He was the primary architect behind the Wall.
21 The level of detail discussed by these two leaders is fascinating, including the introduction of potato and butter rationing, the likelihood of vegetable shortages and the ban on making cream from milk. They agreed that the shortages would be blamed on Western spies and saboteurs. As for the closure operation, they even discussed the situation where the border happened to run down the middle of a street. Ulbricht said that plans were in place to brick up the houses on the East German side, as seen on Bernauer Straße just a few weeks later.
22 The treaty would never happen. It remained an open issue until German Reunification in 1990.
23 The East German 'people's' parliament.
24 Christopher Hilton, *The Wall.*

Chapter 6

1 *Kampfgruppen der Arbeiterklasse*, Combat Groups of the Working Class, a.k.a. *Kampfgruppen* (KG) or *Betriebskampfgruppen*. This militia was set up after the 1953 uprising as a back-up in case of emergency.
2 There were some 380,000 Soviet troops stationed in the DDR, along with 6,000 tanks.
3 The Brandenburg Gate was re-opened by the West German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, on 22 December 1989, when he symbolically walked under it to meet the East German Prime Minister, Hans Modrow. Modrow was voted out of office in March 1990 and would later be convicted of electoral fraud.
4 The checkpoints were given names after the letters of the phonetic alphabet, thus Charlie followed on in sequence from checkpoints Alpha and Bravo.
5 The letters *KZ* were a common piece of graffiti in East Berlin post-Wall.
6 Even at this stage, the Kommandatura still left a chair for the Soviet representative, even though they had not participated since 1948.
7 The *FDGB* (*Freier Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund*, the Free German Trade Union Federation) was the only permitted trade union

organisation in the DDR. Their newspaper was *Tribüne, Organ des Bundesvorstandes des FDGB*.

8 A reference to the much-repeated myth that West Germany was actively 'poaching' or enticing workers from the DDR, as opposed to the reality of desperate escapes from economic and political oppression.

9 Signed in Paris on 20 June 1949 at the conclusion of the blockade and airlift. <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1949/may/05/four-power-agreement-on-germany> accessed 1.7.21.

10 < https://www.willy-brandt-biography.com/historical-sources/documents-and-objects/brandt-to-kennedy-15-august-1961/> accessed 30 June 2021.

11 < https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v14/d120> accessed 30 June 2021.

12 Thomas Flemming, *The Berlin Wall, Division of a City* (Berlin: Be.Bra Verlag, 2009)

13 When the Soviet War memorial was built in 1945, the Soviets chose to build it on Charlottenburger Chaussee, one of Berlin's most iconic avenues that ran from the *Siegessäule* (Victory Column) to the Brandenburg Gate. This happened to be in the British sector, so one can only assume that the Soviets did not expect the British (or the Americans and French) to remain in the city for long. Charlottenburger Chaussee became Straße des 17. Juni in 1953.

14 Schumann's story is a tragic one. After his successful escape he settled in West Germany, got married and had a son. After the wall came down, he struggled to reconcile with his East German family and former colleagues, which led to depression and his suicide in 1998.

15 *IM*s were 'citizen' spies, who spied on their friends, partners, family, neighbours, and colleagues for the *Stasi*. Some volunteered willingly, but others were forced to cooperate following a run-in with the authorities. At its peak in the late 1980s, there were around 189,000 *IM*s working in East Germany, working at every level in society.

Chapter 7

1 '*Dass jeder, der die Gesetze unserer DDR verletzt – auch wenn erforderlich – durch Anwendung der Waffe zur Ordnung gerufen wird*'.

2 '*gegen Verräter und Grenzverletzer [...] die Schusswaffe anzuwenden*'.

3 '*dass die Ausbildung jedes Grenzsoldaten zu einem ausgezeichneten Schützen gewährleistet und dieser in der Lage ist, jedes unbewegliche und sich bewegende Ziel mit dem ersten Schuss (Feuerstoß) bei Tag und Nacht zu vernichten*'.

4 '*zur Festnahme von Personen, die sich den Anordnungen der Grenzposten nicht fügen, indem sie auf Anruf 'Halt – stehenbleiben – Grenzposten!' oder nach Abgabe eines Warnschusses nicht stehenbleiben, sondern offensichtlich versuchen, die Staatsgrenze der DDR zu verletzen und keine andere Möglichkeit zur Festnahme besteht*'. Quotes from Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Federal Agency for Civic Education <https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/deutsche-einheit/deutsche-teilung-deutsche-einheit /52462/grenzverletzer-sind-festzunehmen-oder-zu-vernichten> accessed 13 June 2021.

5 *Gesetz über die Staatsgrenze der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Grenzgesetz) vom 25. März 1982*.

6 Gordon L. Rottman, *The Berlin Wall and the Intra-German border 1961-89* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008). Rottman's book gives an excellent detailed picture of the IGB fortifications.

7 In 1972, after a land swap deal between the Western Allies and the East Germans, a permanent link from the enclave to the US sector was built so residents could have unfettered access to and from the city.

8 Dag Hammarskjold died in a plane crash near Ndola in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) whilst engaging in peace negotiations to try to resolve the Congo Crisis. There have been persistent reports of foul play ever since and his death remains the subject of controversy.

Chapter 8

1 Much to the annoyance of the Americans, the British were not so picky, and were instructed to comply with the new controls, choosing to pick their battles with the East Germans and Soviets.

2 Lightner had a challenging job, managing a dual reporting line to the US Ambassador in Bonn and General Watson, the US military commander in Berlin. His mission also was home to a troublesome collection of CIA spies.

3 The US had 27 tanks in the city and six 105mm howitzers.

4 BRIXMIS, officially, 'The British Commander-in-Chief's Mission to the Soviet Forces of Occupation in Germany', was an intelligence gathering operation working across all of East Germany in plain sight of the East German and Soviet forces.

5 Kennedy did, however, line Clay up for a possible return during the Cuban Missile Crisis the following year, in case the crisis in the Caribbean spilled over to Europe – thankfully, that never happened.

6 The precise yield of the *Tsar Bomba* is open to some debate. The design was theoretically capable of yielding in the region of 100 megatons (with one megaton being the equivalent to one million tons of TNT). The full potential of the design was not used in the 1961 test and the resulting blast was reported as 58 megatons. Later reports suggested that the yield was in fact 50 megatons. The bomb itself was so large that it severely limited the performance of the aircraft carrying it and would have made it all but impossible to deliver to a target in the US. For a detailed description of the *Tsar Bomba* and related tests, see Helion's Europe @War Volume 10, *Tsar Bomba*.

7 Quote from Kennedy's Radio and television address to the American people on the Soviet arms build-up in Cuba, 22 October 1962.

8 Not to trivialise the occasion, there has been much discussion about Kennedy's key phrase, '*Ich bin ein Berliner*'. In some parts of Germany, a 'Berliner' is a sugary jam doughnut, so if taken literally he ended his speech with the immortal line, '*I am a jam doughnut*'. This is of course more urban myth than reality. The pedants would argue the correct phrase to demonstrate his solidarity with the crowd would have been '*Ich bin Berliner*'– '*I'm a Berliner*' or '*I'm from Berlin*'. Kennedy's translation included the definite article 'ein' or 'a', which anglicised the sentence structure, but also gave the words the appropriate emphasis stating that Kennedy *was* one of them. The huge crowd gathered on Rudolph-Wilde-Platz that day would not have been in any doubt of his meaning. The square was renamed John-F.-Kennedy-Platz on 25 November 1963, three days after Kennedy's assassination.

Chapter 9

1 Flemming, *The Berlin Wall*.

2 The 2.4m high section was numbered UL 8.21, while the 3.6m high section was UL 12.41 or UL 12.11.

3 Flemming, *The Berlin Wall*.

4 In another example of Honecker's regime being out of sync with world opinion, the Ministry for State Security was drawing up secret plans for the opening of concentration camps capable of

holding 200,000 dissidents, should the state need to intervene in public unrest.

5 East Germany had a very good optics industry, inherited from the Nazis.

6 <https://berlinwallmap.info> accessed 8.6.21 and Oliver Boyn, *The Divided Berlin 1945-1990* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2011).

7 Checkpoint 'Alpha' was at Helmstedt/Marienborn on the IGB, 'Bravo' at Dreilinden-Drewitz and 'Charlie' at Freidrichstraße in central Berlin. Heinrich-Heine-Straße in the city was sometimes called 'Delta'. There was no 'Echo' or 'Foxtrot' etc.

8 < https://www.berlin.de/mauer/en/wall-trail/western-route/from-hennigsdorf-to-hohen-neuendorf/> accessed 8.6.21.

9 Rottman, *The Berlin Wall*.

Chapter 10

1 All escape attempts were illegal in the DDR, but organised crime groups in the West began to get involved in escape organising, once the financial opportunities were realised. It was not too different to modern-day 'people trafficking'.

2 <https://www.fu-berlin.de/presse/informationen/fup/2017/fup_17_155-studie-opfer-des-ddr-grenzregimes/index.html> and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-40200305> both accessed 15.6.21.

3 ZERV was set up in 1991 specifically to investigate crimes perpetrated by the former East German State and their officials, a latter-day Nuremburg. They investigated government and economic crimes but were criticised for failing to secure many convictions and that most were acquitted or received suspended sentences.

4 Flemming, *The Berlin Wall*.

5 Hilton, Christopher, *The Wall, The People's Story* (London: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2001).

6 < https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/deutsche-einheit/deutsche-teilung-deutsche-einheit/52462/grenzverletzer-sind-festzunehmen-oder-zu-vernichten> accessed 29.6.21.

7 Such as Peter Göring (May 62), Reinhold Huhn (October 62) and Egon Schultz (October 64).

8 Average weekly number of East German refugees processed by West German authorities, 1953 to 1961.

9 Germans classify a *Landstadt* (country town, or village) as a settlement with less than 5,000 people, a *Kleinstadt* (small town or large village) with between 5,000 and 20,000, a *Mittelstadt* (medium town) as 20,000 to 100,000, and a *Großstadt* (large town or city) as 100,000 to 1 million.

Conclusion

1 <https://www.bmw.com/en/automotive-life/berlin-wall-escapes-in-a-bmw-isetta.html> accessed 17.6.21.

Appendix I

1 Rottman, *The Berlin Wall*.

2 Rottman, *The Berlin Wall*.

3 Rottman, *The Berlin Wall*. Center for International Stabilization & Recovery, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, USA <https://www.jmu.edu/cisr/_pages/research/munitions.shtml> and <https://cat-uxo.com/uxo-types/landmines> accessed 28 May 2021. Project MIMEVA, Study of generic Mine-like Objects for R&D in Systems for Humanitarian Demining, Final Report, European Commission, DG Joint Research Centre, Institute for Systems, Informatics and Safety, Technologies for Detection and Positioning Unit, July 2001.

4 These slabs were perforated like a waffle to allow the earth to fill in the gaps and hold the slab in place. They would also be used in 1961 for Wall construction in Berlin, layered on top of each other.

5 Rottman, *The Berlin Wall*.

6 Rottman, *The Berlin Wall*.

Appendix II

1 Wolfgang Mayer, Anita-Tykve-Verlag, December 2002 <www.flucht-und-ausreise.de> via <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1054017/relocation-between-east-and-west-germany-1949-1990/> accessed 18.6.21 and author.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Long, from Great Britain, is a military history researcher and author. His fascination with the Cold War began with a trip to West Berlin in 1986, travelling through Checkpoint Charlie to visit the East. Andrew's writing comes from a desire to make sense of an extremely complex period in modern history, weaving together inter-relating stories involving politics, ideologies, personalities, technological advances and geography. There is still much to be told on this fascinating subject. After a successful career in marketing, Andrew relocated to Cornwall and took up writing full time. This is his second book in a series of titles for Helion's Europe@War series.